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CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY

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preface

INDIA struggled for her political independence inspired by her belief in the way of non-violence, *ahimsa*, and won her freedom with the goodwill of all nations. The Indian Republic has chosen the parliamentary form of democracy to consolidate her national integrity and to achieve a socialistic pattern of society based on ideals of freedom, equality and justice. This democratic reconstruction of State and Society needs to be undergirded by a national culture which would seek to preserve, at the same time, the spiritual wealth of our past heritage and embody the material values emphasised by modern trends in contemporary humanism. This task challenges us to seek for the very best contribution that can be made to the common good by the diverse elements of philosophic thought and religious culture which together constitute the present composite of Indian life and thought.

The writers in this symposium represent some of the more important ideological, cultural and religious streams in our contemporary national being. Each one speaks of the tradition he knows best and in which he sincerely believes, indicating the contribution it can claim to make towards establishing a stable cultural foundation for India's democracy. This volume of essays might give the impression of lacking an underlying unity, since the essays have been written

without any reference to one another. Nevertheless, the discerning reader will not fail to discover that there is an undergirding unity which is furnished by the sincere concern of all the writers that Indian democracy should be built on secure foundations. Only then can it weather the storm of international conflict and withstand any internecine disorder which may result from communal discord.

We are thankful to the contributors to this volume who readily consented to co-operate with this venture of the Committee for Literature on Social Concerns and the Council of YMCA's of India and Ceylon to initiate among the democrats of this country a creative conversation which will strengthen Indian democracy at its roots.

Bangalore,
November 1955.

P. D. DEVANANDAN.
M. M. THOMAS.

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1

the significance of sarvodaya

Bharatan Kumarappa

THE term *Sarvodaya* was coined by Gandhiji to express his ideas in regard to the social goal. Literally the word means the welfare of all. He used the term originally as title of his Gujarati summary of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, meaning that his goal was a social order which would be concerned with fulfilling the needs of *all*, even of the very last. Whether first or last, man is man for all that, and his basic needs for food, clothing and shelter have to be met. This was the teaching of the parable of Jesus from which Ruskin drew the title of his book. Human considerations are to outweigh all else, whether in the economic, social or political sphere.

Today this is not so, whether under free enterprise or under Communism. Under free enterprise, he who can, rises over the shoulders of his fellow-men, and he who cannot, goes to the wall. It is true that the evil of such ruthless competition is mitigated by governments coming to the rescue of the underprivileged and securing for them certain amenities. But this only serves to show that the system itself is not based on the principle of looking after the needs of all, but essentially on the jungle law, 'Each man to himself, the devil take the hindmost'.

As against this, Communism reverses the process. It aims at heaven for the proletariat, but hell for the bourgeois. If free enterprise centred round wealth and prosperity for the 'haves', heedless of what happens to the 'have-nots', Communism centres round the needs of the 'have-nots', even at the cost of liquidating the 'haves'.

Neither free enterprise nor Communism, then, is truly democratic. They do not concern themselves with the welfare of man as such, irrespective of distinctions of wealth or class. Therefore, Gandhiji, genuine lover of man that he was, was not satisfied with either. He felt that these two social systems existed for one section of the community as over against that of another. In contrast with both, therefore, he wanted a social organization which will not be run in the interests of the one or the other, the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, but will concern itself with the good of all, irrespective of distinctions of wealth or class. The goal was not even to be the greatest good of the greatest number. It was to be nothing less than the greatest good of all without exception.

basic doctrines of sarvodaya

Unity in Diversity. It may be thought that since society is made up of diverse elements—the rich and the poor, men of high birth and those of low degree, the strong and the weak, the capable and the incapable—one or other of these is bound to get the upper hand and suppress the other. But, Gandhiji taught that in spite of such differences man must learn to

live in peace and unity with his fellowmen as in a family, the strong helping the weak, the capable the incapable, the rich acting as trustees of the poor, each working for all. What is necessary is not to sharpen the conflict by pitting one section against another with a view to putting an end to one party or the other to the conflict, but to devise ways and means of overcoming the conflict and seek to make the various elements co-operate, each bringing to his task his own unique talents and making use of them to promote the welfare of all.

In this Gandhiji was only reviving India's great genius for synthesis. If Indian culture has survived for thousands of years, it is only because her people have not regarded their culture as demanding suppression of any other. It could therefore co-exist with other cultures, profit from them by a process of give-and-take, and assimilate what was of value in them. This has been, for example, the history of Hinduism in relation to the indigenous gods and goddesses of the various tribes of the country, and in relation to religions like Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Believing, as it does, that the devout soul of any religion can find God, its attitude to other religions has been the democratic one of respect and friendliness, looking for points of unity with them rather than points of difference.

Sarvodaya, or the spirit of unity with all in spite of diversity, is thus not a new idea discovered by Gandhiji. It is but the application to modern social problems, of what underlies India's culture through the ages. Under it the unity aimed at will not be of the steam-roller variety which flattens out all

diversities into a flat homogeneity. Gandhiji would not sacrifice diversity even for unity, for he recognized that diversity must be expected where individuals are not suppressed but are allowed to think and act for themselves. For him the individual had infinite worth. Like Jesus he believed that it profited nothing if a man gained the whole world, but lost his own soul. *Sarvodaya*, therefore, would care for and nurture even the humblest. A bruised reed shall it not break, and a smoking flax shall it not quench. Under it the individual, even to the very last, is to enjoy maximum self-rule, but within the limits of the harmonious development of all.

It is obvious that such a social goal, with its emphasis on leaving the individual free to develop himself in his own way, has great significance for democracy, for democracy in the last analysis means respect for the individual, irrespective of his views or way of life. The true democrat, or he who believes in *Sarvodaya*, will therefore not force others to follow his way of life. He will not malign anyone who thinks differently from him, or align himself with any exclusive bloc to suppress the opponent. On the other hand, he will bridge the gulfs which divide people, and help them to live together in peace and amity notwithstanding their differences. Such reconciling and unifying of all in a co-operative brotherhood will be the primary concern of him who aims at *Sarvodaya*.

Social Equality. This being the goal, social distinctions which divide people from each other, such for example as those based on wealth, class, caste, religion, race or sex, are for *Sarvodaya* of no account whatsoever. *Sarvodaya* aims at nothing less than per-

fect social equality. In this respect it is democracy at its purest and best.

Power only to those devoted to Public Work. In view of the fact that *Sarvodaya* aims at bringing people of diverse kinds and view-points together, it is well to consider what *Sarvodaya* implies in regard to party government, which is usually regarded as the machinery by means of which people can effectively govern themselves. The so-called democracies of today pride themselves in adult franchise, which is exercised to send one party or the other to power over the affairs of the country. The parties, therefore, at the time of elections line themselves up against each other in a trial of strength, and on the one hand seek to woo the voter by promises, and on the other run down other competing parties. The motive primarily is power for one's party and office for oneself. In consequence, the atmosphere, both during and after the elections, is vitiated by selfishness, greed for power, and by strife. This surely is not the way to achieve *Sarvodaya* or the unity of all.

A co-operative brotherhood, such as what *Sarvodaya* implies, can be achieved, it would seem, not by those who thus seek their own good or the success of their party, but by those who strive untiringly for the good of the entire community by selfless service. It was for this reason that, once independence was attained, Gandhiji advised the Indian National Congress to wind itself up and to turn itself into a Lok Seva Sangh, an association for service of the people. Under *Sarvodaya* then administrative responsibility will be given, not to those who belong to this party or that, but to those

who distinguish themselves by character and devoted public service. "By their works shall ye know them." Those who have by service won public confidence and are known for their integrity and whole-hearted devotion to the good of all, will be the ones entrusted with power. They will not seek it, but authority will come to them whether they like it or not. Gandhiji is a supreme example of such a person, who never sought office but rose to being the undisputed Father and Guide of the Nation.

Consensus of Opinion. Party-government is essentially rule of the majority. This cannot be pleasing to the minority, which awaits the day when it can oust the party in power, and carry out its own will. So the country is ever in a state of instability, torn between the majority and the minority. It is true that differences of opinion are good. As we have already pointed out, under *Sarvodaya* such differences will be respected and never suppressed. But these need not give rise to parties or to party rule. Statesmanship under *Sarvodaya* will consist in winning over the opponent and carrying out policies which have the approval of all. In a true democracy or brotherhood there should be no one who feels that his voice is not heard and that he is forced into submission by the brute force of the majority. The head of a *Sarvodaya* state and those who agree with him would therefore educate public opinion and obtain unanimous support for measures to be launched. Otherwise it will not be the rule of all, as *Sarvodaya* aims to be, but only the rule of the many, where a few are left feeling disgruntled and frustrated. A believer in *Sarvodaya* thinks like Jesus that it is better that a millstone

were hung round the neck of him who would cause offence to one of these "little ones" of society and he be drowned in the sea than that one of these "little ones" be offended. The ideal, therefore, to which a government striving to achieve *Sarvodaya* would work would be consensus of opinion as in a family rather than decisions by majority.

Self-reliance, not Dependence on Governments. We have spoken of a *Sarvodaya* government, but actually the *Sarvodaya* ideal is one where there will be no government in the usual sense, based on force and punishment. Such a government is required to enforce discipline among its members, so that they may not work against each other's good. But when the members of a *Sarvodaya* social order have so disciplined themselves that they not only do not work against each other, but strive for the good of all, then obviously no government is necessary. The ideal of democracy is then a society in which there is no government based on force. The individual is left free to govern himself and is under no external compulsion. This is what Gandhiji called *Ram Rajya* or the Kingdom of God. But so long as the goal is not reached, and man is still imperfect, a government is necessary to regulate the affairs of society in the light of the good of all.

Accordingly a people who aspire after *Sarvodaya* or true democracy or self-rule for the individual, will so organize their group life that there will be less and less need of a government enforcing its mandates from above. They will take charge of everything that concerns them and seek to run it in the interests of all. The goal being freedom from government, they can

hope to move towards it, only if from the start they strive to be independent of governmental aid, and become self-dependent and self-sufficient.

The tendency in the so-called democracies, including India, and in Communist countries is just the opposite of this. Everywhere in the world, governments are becoming more and more powerful and taking charge of all departments of national life. Every state is becoming a welfare state in one form or other, and controls the affairs of the nation in every detail—food, clothes, housing, education, health, occupation, recreation, travel and what not. This is definitely a reactionary development from the *Sarvodaya* point of view, as it undermines the people's strength and prevents them from learning self-reliance. The people become weak and helpless, while the state grows strong and all-powerful. No one who really believes in democracy can look upon this tendency without the gravest concern. Every country, from U.S.A. and Britain to Russia and China, shouts itself hoarse in favour of democracy and people's rule, but in reality is strengthening its stranglehold over the people. It does not, of course, deliberately aim at weakening the people, as a welfare state. It is so eager that its country should make headway in the quickest time possible that it plans at the top and expects the people to fall in line. But more haste less speed, for in the process the people have ceased to think for themselves. They look helplessly to the government to do things for them. This is certainly not the way to build up a strong resourceful people, without whom a government is a democracy only in name. Far better to go slow in the way of material prosperity and to lay truly and well the

foundations of democracy in developing self-help and self-rule in the people. From the point of view of *Sarvodaya*, developing the spiritual resources of a people for democracy is even more important than merely developing the natural resources of a country, and in so far as welfare states try to do things for the people instead of leaving them free to do things for themselves, they come dangerously near to becoming subversive of democracy.

Moreover, in modern democracies, the only link between the individual and his government is the vote, whereby he is enabled to elect his own representatives to government. But the question is how far these representatives really represent him, for in large groups such as nations with populations of several millions, the voter and the candidate for election can have little personal knowledge of one another, with the result that the vote is captured very often not by the most deserving by knowledge and capacity, but by one who has the backing of an influential party, or money to buy up votes, or the gift of a long tongue whereby he can carry away mob audiences. Consequently the governments so formed are inadequately representative of the people, and therefore far from being real democracies.

Besides, although it is true that in constitutional democracies those in power are responsive to public criticism, still in the main governmental policies are shaped by a few persons at the top. Thus, for example, the majority of our nation may be against the use of intoxicating drinks, and yet one state may venture out on Prohibition while another puts it off, depending on the man at the top. The policy of the

state rests thus very largely on the few in charge of the government.

Further, many of the problems of modern governments are very complicated, as they relate to issues about which the average individual knows very little. So he leaves them to be tackled by those in power. In effect, therefore, the individual today exercises very little influence on the affairs of the state. This is far from satisfactory from the point of view of advancing towards true democracy or rule of the people.

Consequently those who are striving for *Sarvodaya* will seek to get people in small groups to direct their affairs themselves as far as possible. When these people deal thus merely with what affects them and their close neighbours, they may be expected to be familiar with all the relevant facts and persons concerned. The political life of the country will then centre round local self-government or *panchayat* rule, where a small group or village administers itself by means of a *panchayat* or executive committee, consisting of trusted people of the group or village, elected to this office by the people of the unit. For dealing with matters which arise in relation to neighbouring units or villages, provinces and the country, there may be district, provincial and national administrations. The villages will elect their district administrations, the district administrations the provincial, and the provincial the national with a president as the chief executive. The national government at the centre will have little to do beyond acting as a co-ordinating agency and dealing with foreign affairs. The actual administration of the country will thus be in the hands of the several local units.

Planning by Villagers. Under this system the villagers will plan for their own welfare, and on the basis of these, the taluks, districts and provinces. The plans will then be co-ordinated by them, and experts called in for advice where needed. Planning will thus proceed from the village up. The village planners will plan out every aspect of village life and seek to make their village by gradual stages a model one in respect of sanitation, health, housing, irrigation, agriculture, industries, education, recreation, roads and self-defence. The planners will be trusted people of the village itself, perhaps members of the village *panchayat*. They may invite outsiders or experts to assist them. It is obvious that such planning can take place only where the village unit can be self-sufficient at least for its primary requirements. If, on the other hand, it is entirely dependent for its needs on external factors, planning on its part when these factors are beyond its control is rather futile.

Decentralization. When planning is done thus by the people themselves in small units like the village, it is decentralized. The larger and larger the unit planned, the more remote the planners are from the people, till in the case of a centralized national plan, the planners are practically strangers to the people. Centralization spells death to democracy, for it means power and initiative are taken away from the people and concentrated at the centre. *Sarvodaya* cannot tolerate this. It will therefore work for the greatest amount of decentralization.

Let us see what this will mean in the realm of production. Today the tendency in the world is to take away production, e.g., textile manufacture, from the

hands of the village producer, *viz.*, spinner and hand-loom weaver, and to concentrate it in a spinning and weaving mill. Production then in innumerable village homes ceases, and takes place within the four walls of a mill. If the village producer wants work he now has to become an employee of the mill. He can no more be his own master, as he was when he produced in his own home. He loses all initiative and freedom in his work, and becomes part of a huge army of mill-hands. The roots of democracy or self-rule in the economic sphere have thus been removed. But he is told that he enjoys democracy in the political sphere. When, however, a man has no scope in his daily occupation to be master of himself, in what sense can he be master in the affairs of the nation? Democracy to be genuine, surely, cannot be thus conveniently shelved to the political sphere, while in the economic sphere there is centralization or concentration of control and direction. Man being an organic whole, his life cannot be split up thus into departments and dealt with apart. The integral or synthetic approach of *Sarvodaya* prevents it from committing this blunder. It insists, therefore, on democracy being established in the economic sphere just as much as in the political, if it is to be at all effective. Indeed, in so far as the economic relates to the daily life of the individual, it would seem that it is even more important to ensure that the individual develops his personality by exercising self-rule in his occupation than merely in the affairs of state, about which, as already said, he may know very little and in which he may not be sufficiently interested. To get over this difficulty, it is true that workers in centralized units like mills are today being given a certain amount of control over production. This is a healthy

sign. At best it can attenuate the evil. The difficulty cannot be fully overcome, it would seem, till a man is left in complete charge of his own work as in cottage production.

Moreover, where there is centralized production, there is great concentration of wealth or power. Those in control of production, whether under free enterprise or under Communism, have tremendous wealth or power over the affairs of the nation, while the share of these which falls to the lot of the worker is comparatively infinitesimal. Such great inequality in wealth or power is unjust, and far from democratic. If such glaring inequalities are to be abolished, and all are to have a modicum of this world's goods and power over their affairs, as they should under a genuine democracy, it would seem possible only under a de-centralized economy.

Further, centralized production requires enormous amounts of capital. The worker cannot find it from his own slender resources. So he becomes dependent for his livelihood on whoever can contribute the capital, whether it be private individuals or the state. No slavery is so complete as that of one who feels that if he is to feed himself and his dependents, he has to submit to his financiers, whether he will or no. Under centralized production, whether of the private or state variety, the worker in the last analysis is reduced just to this state of comparative slavery. He tries, of course, to get over it by organizing trade unions and such like to assert his will, and succeeds partially. But he can be liberated from it wholly, it would seem, only when his work is such that he can find the necessary capital himself. This he can, only when the capital

required is small as in decentralized cottage production.

For these and other such reasons *Sarvodaya* turns away in principle from large-scale centralized production, and centres round a revival of home industries or self-employment, symbolized by the spinning wheel. It may not be possible to decentralize production in this manner in every respect. Some articles, e.g., locomotives or automobiles, can be manufactured only in factories. In such cases, the factories may be run co-operatively by the people or by the state in the interests of the consumers. But as far as possible production under *Sarvodaya* will be decentralized.

This is not just a desire to put the clock back and to go back to the past. *Sarvodaya* believes in taking full advantage of modern scientific advancement and engineering skill. But science and technical knowledge will not be used as today to centralize production but to improve methods of cottage production, so that under *Sarvodaya* we shall have such up-to-date tools and machines as help the village artisan to produce easily and quickly what he and his neighbours require.

Under this system, then, the nation will consist of relatively self-sufficient village units producing primarily for their own use.

Ending Exploitation and War. The virtue of this arrangement is that not only thus the greatest amount of democracy or self-rule for all in a region will be realized and great inequalities avoided, but that it will not bring about poverty and unemployment and endanger democracy or self-rule elsewhere. The trouble with industrialized countries of the world today, who

claim in some form or other to be democracies themselves, is that their production is so vastly beyond their own capacity to supply raw materials for their factories and markets for their manufactures, that to keep their people in employment, they throw all ideas of democracy to the winds, and seek to secure what they need by establishing control over other countries. They want these countries also as fruitful fields of investment of their surplus capital and as military bases to protect themselves from their rivals. If these areas of the world are already in the control of other powers, and they themselves have built up sufficient military strength, they provoke war with the hope that in the ensuing scramble they can carve out a "sphere of influence" for themselves. All this is of course far from being democratic or leaving people free to themselves. And yet the leaders fool their people by telling them that they are sacrificing their wealth and their young men to make the world safe for democracy or people's rule !

Such blatant lying and ravages in the sacred name of democracy on weaker peoples to exploit them, can be avoided only if production were decentralized as under *Sarvodaya*, and restricted to the needs of one's own immediate neighbours. There would be no incentive then to look with greedy eyes on the four corners of the world to see whom we can devour. *Sarvodaya* thus seeks to root out the seeds of exploitation and war and to promote self-rule and peace everywhere.

Co-operation and World-brotherhood. It may be contended, however, that such a decentralized economic and political order as *Sarvodaya* wants to

establish is contrary to the spirit of the times. By the advancement of science and modern means of communication the whole world is becoming one. What is the sense then in splitting it up into tiny fragments and expecting each to develop apart from the other ? But this is not at all what *Sarvodaya* intends. The "fragments" in *Sarvodaya* will be based on the principle of co-operation, not only within, where all in the village do the work of the village co-operatively as in a joint family, but also without. For it is not expected that a village unit can be so completely self-sufficient that it need not obtain anything from outside. There will be give-and-take between the village units on a mutually helpful basis. There will also be several matters affecting groups of villages in an area, like for example irrigation or supply of electricity, which will have to be arranged co-operatively by the villages concerned. With roads and easy means of communication, people will move from place to place and get to know other regions. More especially education of the young will aim at removing ignorance in regard to those of other regions and seek to promote a feeling of oneness with all.

On the other hand, co-operation and world-brotherhood seem impossible to achieve under centralized production, whereby although people in various parts of the world may be tied together by bonds of economic dependence they are ever in ceaseless conflict, as we have already pointed out, in their hunt for raw materials and markets, and threaten humanity with total annihilation. The best way to root out such conflict and bring about a feeling of friendliness and co-operation with all seems therefore to be for people in

small groups to be as far as possible economically independent, at least so far as their primary needs go. Only then can they build up sufficient strength to co-operate with others. Friendship and co-operation can exist only between equals on the basis of independence and strength, not on the basis of inequality and weakness. Indeed inequality and weakness call for conflict and exploitation. Hence it is that *Sarvodaya* pleads for a decentralized economy where the units will be strong and self-reliant. In seeking to realize this, however, it will be most essential to see that loyalty to one's little group, or the village, is not allowed to develop at the cost of loyalty to larger and larger groups, such as the district, province, nation and the world. Nay more, as the basic principle on which *Sarvodaya* rests is the fundamental unity of all, it will seek to inculcate even sacrifice of one's group, if necessary, for the sake of service to humanity at large.

how to achieve sarvodaya

The pattern of society envisaged by *Sarvodaya* is not difficult to reach in India, as India is predominantly rural, and consists essentially of villages which once governed themselves through their *panchayats* and produced all they required for themselves by distributing the work of the village among the various castes or trade co-operatives. They went away from this ideal when later the village organization broke up, and when the people began to look upon each other as inferiors and superiors and to work against each other. What the worker for *Sarvodaya* would therefore have to do is, while drawing on our heritage in regard to self-sufficient villages and village self-government, to do all

in his power to destroy ideas of inferiority and superiority and to forge bonds of unity within the village, and between the village and those outside, so that the *Sarvodaya* ideal of unity and brotherhood of all mankind is realized.

Self-restraint and Love. It is obvious that the goal set by *Sarvodaya*, of achieving unity with all, even with one's opponents, calls for the exercise of great self-restraint. Besides, a social order like *Sarvodaya* which aims at maximum self-rule for the individual will end in chaos if self-rule is not at all times tempered by self-restraint. In fact the goal cannot be achieved except by self-forgetting love—a love which will go out to others, recognizing one's responsibility to one's neighbours, helping the weak, regarding one's wealth, if any, as a social trust to be used for the good of all, and cementing human bonds.

A goal such as this, of all-embracing, self-giving love, presupposes deep spiritual foundations. It implies a living faith in the One that pervades all, making all men one. It requires great self-discipline and development of soul-force. The virtues which Gandhiji regarded as necessary to be cultivated are utter truthfulness, non-violence or love, chastity, restraint in food and drink, non-possession, fearlessness, *swadeshi* or loyalty to one's neighbours, respect for all religions, manual labour and absolute social equality.

In this its essential spiritual basis, *Sarvodaya* is the very antithesis of Communism which is avowedly materialistic, although in regard to its goal *Sarvodaya* is not dissimilar to Communism. Communism believes that the ideal social order can be realized only when

the exploiter is done away with by physical force. For this it builds on class-hatred throwing morality and religion to the winds. It resorts to periodical purges and war. *Sarvodaya*, on the other hand, believes that its goal, being one which demands love, cannot be achieved except by love. Ends and means are organically related. You cannot reap love where you sow hatred. On the other hand, what you sow you reap a hundredfold. Hatred and violence have a way of recoiling on their perpetrator and breeding more hatred and violence. The only way to evoke love therefore is to have nothing but love in one's heart for one's opponent, and to restrain oneself and to undergo self-suffering to the utmost in the exercise of this love. This according to Gandhiji is the only way to achieve *Sarvodaya*.

Satyagraha. If you wish the landlord, for example, to act justly by the tenant, or the capitalist to share his wealth with the worker, or the imperialist to give up his rule, the way is not to antagonize him by threatening him with expropriation or death, but to appeal to his conscience and reason by self-suffering love and nobility of character, and to convert him and make him a willing ally of the new social order. This is the technique evolved by Gandhiji for ending long entrenched opposition of any kind whatsoever. He called it *Satyagraha* or clinging to Truth and Love at the cost of untold suffering to oneself and even death, without wishing the slightest harm to the opponent. Through this means, Gandhiji taught from his own personal experience of over forty years of public life that the erstwhile enemy becomes one's friend and supporter. Similarly today Vinoba Bhave

is proving by his *Bhoodan* or Land Gifts Mission that when a landlord is approached by a sincere public worker of character, he relents and parts with his land to be distributed freely among landless cultivators. Here is revolution, in accordance with the principles of *Sarvodaya*, whereby inequalities are sought to be ended, not by the sword, but by appealing to the best in one's fellowmen. The virtue of this method is that it leaves no bitterness in the mouth of anyone, but enhances goodwill and co-operation between all. It is twice blest. It blesses him that gives and him that takes.

Conclusion

It would be folly to turn away from *Sarvodaya* saying that it is too impractical and demands too much of the ordinary man. So far as our people go, they seem, on the other hand, eminently suited by their cultural past to strive for *Sarvodaya*. It seems impossible only to those of us who have come too much under the influence of Western education. But to our masses, rooted in our own culture, *Sarvodaya* will seem a natural goal. For self-restraint and even voluntary self-suffering have been instilled in us for ages ; simplicity of living rather than multiplication of wants has been our ideal ; we have been taught to give first place to spiritual attainment, not to acquisition of wealth ; through the joint-family, caste and village organization we have been trained to curb self in the interests of the group ; we have learnt through the ages that non-violence or love is the highest religion and have been trained to extend it even to the animal and insect worlds ; we have been instructed from time

immemorial that the highest and lowest, the Brahmin and the outcaste, are pervaded by the One Being, that therefore they are one, and that the distinctions we observe in daily life between men and men are *maya* or ultimately unreal. All these are valuable teachings basic to the building up of *Sarvodaya*. Our ancestors have through them provided us with the necessary background and spiritual equipment. All that remains is leadership, which will draw on our heritage and apply it under modern conditions. This is what leaders like Gandhiji or Vinoba have done. And what they have been able to achieve shows that what is necessary for advancing towards *Sarvodaya* is but a handful of men, or even one man, of high ideals and purity of character, aflame with zeal for the cause. The influence of such men will spread like leaven to transform society in the light of the goal which they set themselves to reach. This is the great heritage that Gandhiji has left for India to strive for in her quest for true democracy, or maximum self-rule for the individual and universal brotherhood.

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the impact of socialism

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THE Industrial Revolution in the West presented the problem of poverty, with all its consequent ills, in a new light. True, poverty has been with us always. But it was connected with a predominantly agricultural civilization where industry was organised on a handicraft basis. In such a social pattern, even the poorest belong somewhere, and have a place, though almost fixed, in the life of the community. They may get the merest rudiments of subsistence, but these are generally assured to them. They are not liable to suffer from sudden unemployment, consequent upon trade fluctuations and the cupidity of the employer.

It was felt that the new poverty and misery were the direct result of indiscriminate and inordinate pursuit of wealth, characteristic of industrial society. This pursuit of wealth was made into a kind of philosophy of life by the economists and utilitarians. They held that, if each individual worked with a view to his own private self-interest, the cumulative result will be the public good. This meant free competition—*laissez faire*. It was based upon the idea that as the employer so the employee is a free agent. Both know their self-interest and are equally intelligent and equally well-informed. The state or any other organization has

therefore no right to interfere in the free play of economic forces.

As the industrial revolution began in England, the earliest protest against this heartless and cruel arrangement of economic life was voiced there. It was first expressed by literary writers, men like Carlyle and Ruskin. They were romantic writers who relied more upon imagination and moral fervour than on a critical study of facts about capitalist society.

The other quarter from which protest was voiced was that of the Socialists. Men like St. Simon and Fourier drew imaginative pictures of an ideal society free from injustice, inequality and exploitation. Their golden age lay in the future and not in the past. Some of them established colonies where life was lived on a communist basis and the inmates worked in co-operation and enjoyed equally the fruits of their joint labour and there was no private property. These were the Utopian Socialists.

Karl Marx and scientific socialists

The third class of critics of the capitalist order created by the industrial revolution call themselves Scientific Socialists. They did not consider the industrial revolution, with all its injustice and misery, as altogether an evil, but as a necessary step forward in the march of civilization. They studied and analyzed the new problems created. They searched for their causes and suggested the cure. They believed the cure could only be achieved through a bloody revolution, which will abolish all classes and establish a classless society. Marx was a prophet of this new school of

socialist thought. His approach to the problems created by the industrial revolution was not that of a pragmatic reformer. He built upon the material he had collected, arranged and systematized, a theory not only of economics but of history and the world as a whole. This theory was claimed to be scientific. As such it was of universal application. Like the physical sciences, this new social theory was based upon materialism. The conclusions arrived at were therefore considered as inevitable as in the physical sciences. They must work themselves out in society in spite of any will to the contrary, human or divine. The new materialism was called Dialectical Materialism, as distinguished from the earlier, which was styled mechanical. The new 'matter' of Marxism was supposed to act dialectically, that is, through the conflict of opposites—thesis and anti-thesis—on to a higher synthesis, by a process of affirmation, contradiction and re-formation in a higher unity. It was just like the Hindu Trinity which creates, destroys and recreates.

History too according to Marx is an exact science. It represents the progressive unfolding of the dialectical process. It began with slave society which dialectically changed into feudal society. This, by a similar process, changed into capitalist society which was soon to be replaced through a dialectical urge into the dictatorship of the proletariat, ushering in a universal classless society. All this is neatly arranged even as Marx desired it.

In society, the root cause of the dialectical movement is economics. All human knowledge, science, culture, morality and religion are derived from and dependent on economic activity. In this activity, the

mode of economic production, especially the ownership of the instruments of production is the decisive factor. This ownership has ever divided society into two opposing and warring classes, of the 'haves' and 'havenots'. The proletariat will evolve a dictatorship during the course of the struggle. This dictatorship will consolidate itself during the course of the revolutionary struggle, and establish a classless society, where the state will fade away and all misery and war will end, and everyone will live happily ever after! Marx was able, thus, through his dialectical materialism, to "grasp this sorry scheme of things entire", and, by his proletarian revolution, "shatter it to bits and remould it nearer to the heart's desire".

It is not our purpose here to examine Marxian theory. That has been done often enough. We believe that it is neither good science, nor good philosophy. Matter, as the final cause of all that is, is beyond the scope of scientific investigation. Moreover the connotation of the word has been changing. Marx himself changed it. Today matter is so finely refined that it has become a mystic something whose existence is taken for granted for scientific investigation and mathematical calculations.

Moreover the dialectical movement in society has neither a historical nor an anthropological basis. It is a pre-conceived idea derived from Hegelian metaphysics, which Marx learned in his young days and which he could never get rid of. But he put it upside down. However it had one great advantage. It gave his thinking the respectability of a rounded off monistic system, which could explain everything in the

universe. It was fitted into the oversimplified European history and economic theories prevailing at the time.

However, the essence of Marx's philosophy is not dialectical materialism or the so-called scientific interpretation of history, economics and ethics. What is of importance is the contribution he made to sociological thought by his patient and detailed study and research of capitalist economy as it worked a century back in the industrialized West, especially England. He vividly and minutely described the poverty, misery, ignorance, squalor which was the lot of the masses of workers in centralized and mechanized mills and factories run for private profit of the few who owned the instruments of production. Marx passionately denounced this inequity in terms reminiscent of the prophets of the Old Testament. His plea for the under-dog struck a sympathetic chord in every sensitive soul. He also roused the consciousness of the masses to their miserable condition. He pointed out that there could be no liberty for the individual under conditions of economic inequality. The ballot box was no substitute for bread. He laid bare the hollowness and hypocrisy of the current moral code. Religion as practised merely taught the masses to bear their chains in patient contentment. It worked as the opiate of the masses.

All this was true of capitalist society at the time Marx wrote. Some of it is true even today. But it did not require a monolithic, rigid and fanatical theory to explain or remedy it.

propositions of marxism

Bereft of its metaphysical trappings of dialectical materialism, which only the elect can understand, Marxism enunciates the following propositions for revolutionary action :

1. The appalling misery of the industrial masses is due to their exploitation by the capitalist class, who own and control the instruments of economic production and use them for private profit.
2. The exploitation and misery of the masses cannot end till they have captured power and become the masters of the state and nationalised all instruments of production, lands, factories and the financial apparatus used by the capitalist class for private gains.
3. This can be done only through revolutionary insurrections or war on class basis throughout the world.
4. Any amelioration of the condition of the masses through moral persuasion or through democratic action or trade union activities is useless. These activities only blunt the edge of mass discontent and postpone the day of revolutionary reckoning. However, all these activities must be exploited, especially the parliamentary and trade union activities, in the interests of the Revolution.
5. International wars are the greatest opportunities for the proletariat of the different

countries to rise. They must be turned into civil wars in which, with varying success, the proletariat are bound to succeed. Therefore, war between democratic, capitalist and imperialist countries is to be welcomed. Where possible, it is to be fomented.

6. The proletariat must be the vanguard of the revolutionary struggle. For this it will be necessary to establish its dictatorship.
7. For the success of the revolution, dictatorship must be established in every country. There must therefore be a central organization which must guide, direct and finance revolutionary movements everywhere. There must also be a centrally guided propaganda machine.
8. Everything that is done in furtherance of the revolution is just and moral. There can be no other morality.

These in brief are some of the important propositions that Communism enunciates and believes in. They were systematised and made rigid after the capture of power in Russia by the Bolshevik party. They have been acted upon whenever occasion has arisen. However, there were Marxians who denied the validity of some of the propositions or that they were all enunciated by Marx. Those who in Russia differed from the Bolshevik interpretation were liquidated. But outside that Holy Land, the Social Democrats and Socialist parties in the West parted company from

Communists. Generally the non-Communist Socialists accepted the analysis and criticism of capitalist society made by Marx. But they differed about the methods to be adopted to bring about desired changes, and the pattern of reconstruction of an equalitarian society.

socialists outside Russia

The fundamental differences between the Communists who derived their light from Moscow and the various Socialist parties outside Russia principally centre round :

- (1) Moral values.
- (2) Democracy, and the place of the individual in society.
- (3) The inevitability of a worldwide bloody revolution and, consequently, of civil strife and international war.

Of course, there are also differences about various other aspects of Marx's theory. But here we will confine ourselves to the three points we have mentioned. They are interrelated.

Christian morality is mainly based on the idea of the brotherhood of man. This conception of ethics since the renaissance has inspired humanitarian and cosmopolitan thought in the West. It has resulted in the idea of social service and philanthropy irrespective of caste, creed, colour or race. True, these ideas

are not always put into practice, but they represent the moral values of Christian West at its best. Even when the Utilitarians enunciated the doctrine of the greatest good of the greatest number, they saw to it that the prevalent moral values based upon Christianity in which they had been brought up, were not repudiated by their new ethics, but were somehow saved.

Democracy in many countries in the West was the result of the practical inconveniences involved in absolute and arbitrary rule. However, its systematic exposition and justification lay in the belief of moral values such as justice, equality, respect for a person's individuality. These values were first sought to be realized in the domain of law and politics. Law did not recognize any difference between one citizen and another. In the political field the conception of equality assumed that the common man, however ignorant individually, in the aggregate, knows what is good for him. From this evolved the idea of representative government through the vote, the ballot box and other parliamentary institutions. If political issues are to be settled and if even political revolution (meaning the change of government) is to be carried out through the vote, there must be free discussion. Therefore democracy cannot properly function without free speech, with the fewest possible regulations necessary for corporate living. If parliamentary institutions are to function on the basis of a multi-party arrangement, there must be freedom of association subject to the needs of public order and morality.

preserving democratic freedom

Socialist parties in the West, having enjoyed the blessings of democratic freedom, were not prepared to abandon these rights for the doubtful advantage in the future, of a heaven regulated by the so-called proletarian dictatorship, whatever economic security it may offer. Many socialists also believe that liberal democracy can be transformed into democratic socialism by constitutional means, without conspiracy, civil or international war. Even if some direct action is needed, it need not involve violence.

Since Marx enunciated his philosophy, in democracy itself there have been what may be called revolutionary changes. All these have been in the direction of more and more economic equality and social security. It is being progressively realized that, with inordinate differences in wealth, democratic rights such as equality before the law and the freedom of vote have little value. In several small European countries, in England, in Australia and New Zealand, the trend towards socialism is very marked. Socialist and Labour Governments have, sometimes, been in power in these countries. All this has been done through the ballot box without violent revolution.

In economics the theory of *laissez faire* has been abandoned. Every democratic government thinks its right, nay its duty, to interfere with economic activities of individuals, groups and corporations to safeguard public interest or common good. Every democratic state today exercises control, smaller or greater, depending upon circumstances and the atmosphere of public opinion over all economic activity.

All this has confirmed the idea that socialism can be established in democratic countries in accordance with the genius of the people and their social consciousness by a pragmatic approach to social and economic problems and by social engineering, without a bloody revolution and without accepting a rigid, fanatical, monistic theory of economics or of society. It is held that after all socialism is merely a logical development of democracy. It is the extension of the idea of equality already recognised in the political field to cover the economic and social fields.

On the other hand, the Bolshevik regime in Russia, after the capture of power, has developed into a dictatorship of a single rigidly conditioned and disciplined political party. When the party boss happens to be a powerful and forceful personality, as in the case of Lenin and Stalin, the regime becomes the dictatorship of an almost deified individual. As this dictatorship combines both political and economic power, it cannot fail to regulate the whole life of the individual and society in all their activities. Any deviation from the approved pattern be it in politics, economics, religion, ethics and in any field of knowledge, philosophy, history, science, literature and the arts, cannot but be regarded as dangerous to such a regime. This is illustrated by the periodical purges that have characterized Bolshevik Russia from the beginning. It began by liquidating opponents and enemies. Soon those in power began liquidating their own comrades, including most of those who were the inspirers and initiators of the Communist Revolution. With all their admiration for Marx, for what the Bolshevik Party has undoubtedly been able to achieve in Russia, and

its great strength internally and internationally, the Socialists and Radicals, who have enjoyed the benefits of liberal democracy, feel that there is something wrong somewhere with the Russian Revolution.

futility of violence

The idea of world revolution on class basis rests upon the assumption that there are throughout the world two classes opposed to each other in mortal conflict, the world capitalists and the world proletariat. These two classes have no national sentiments or affiliations. This is true neither to history nor to contemporary facts. It has been found that in every internal crisis or international struggle, not only the capitalists but the proletariat have rallied round the national state. In spite of the Communist propaganda asking the proletariat of the world to unite, they have not formed themselves into one solid bloc against the national state, presumed to be the instrument of capitalism. In the evolution of history, national states represent a forward step in the consolidation of geographical and national boundaries. The next step in the progressive advance of humanity should be towards a super-state world organization. This is how the idea of one world living in peaceful co-operation can be realized. The idea of class war would only involve the world in bloody civil and international wars. It would be a retrograde step.

Moreover, nothing can be more disturbing in the internal politics of a country than to have within its borders groups of citizens who have or are suspected to have extra-territorial loyalties. Such a suspicion

cuts at the very root of national unity and creates internal tension ; more so in a democracy, which implies certain fundamental unities, the most important being that every group or party within the country is in the last resort loyal to the state. No state can live and function smoothly in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and distrust between groups and parties, especially the suspicion of extra-territorial loyalty.

Then about war itself, there is a wide gulf between the Communists and Socialists. The utter cruelty and horror of modern war, with nuclear weapons, make it impossible to think of it in terms of any worthwhile social change. A new world war, under modern conditions, does not mean the destruction of a particular nation or country. It means the destruction of humanity and the end of civilization. To make it therefore the instrument of revolution is not only absurd, but diabolical.

To sum up, the belief in dialectical materialism is no part of Socialistic creed. Also, generally the Socialists, though they do not subscribe to the rules of conventional morality, believe that there are certain moral standards to which moral judgments must be referred. Without such a criterion for value judgments, society cannot function smoothly. The Socialists further believe in democracy. They also feel, given favourable circumstances, Socialism, meaning social and economic equality, can be democratically brought about, at least so much of it as would make the rest inevitable. Socialists, unlike the Communists, do not subscribe to the theory of world revolution. They feel that each country can march to Socialism through revolution or evolution, in accordance with its own history, traditions,

circumstances and genius. The Socialists have therefore no central organization for guiding, directing, controlling or financing the activities of Socialist parties in different countries. True, they have a central organization in Europe, but it is organized for purposes of discussion and comparing notes and experiences. The Socialists also do not idolize war. They believe in international co-operation and the strengthening of the U.N.O.

distinctive features of Indian socialism

These main points of difference from Communism are common to both Western and Indian Socialism. But the latter has distinctive features of its own. This was due to the colonial status of India, involving the country in the national struggle for political independence, to its backward economy and the influence of Gandhiji's thought. These factors are interconnected.

In the beginning, as in the West so in India, there was little difference between Communists, Scientific Socialists or Marxists. By whatever name called, they all believed in Marxian thought. Even when certain differences developed, they were not fundamental enough to preclude the formation of united popular fronts. However, the gulf between the Communists and Socialists has kept widening. In India, there was complete rupture about the year 1941 when members of the two parties were confined together in the detention camp at Deoli. Even this did not prevent the Socialists from calling themselves Marxists. They felt that Communists, under the leadership of Russia, if they had not altogether abandoned, had perverted

Marxian thought, and they (the Socialists) adhered to it in its pristine purity. Also practical differences arose about the attitude of the two parties towards Bolshevik Russia. The first loyalty of Communists was towards Russia. For the Socialists, the freedom of India was the condition precedent to the establishment of Socialism in this country. They therefore repudiated the idea of following in the leading strings of Russia and shaping their national and international policies to suit Russian requirements. For the Communists, for instance, as soon as Russia entered the last World War, it automatically transformed itself from an imperial to a people's war, a war of liberation. This was held to be true not only for the free countries of the world but also of colonial dependencies. The Socialists, like other Congressmen, though they were anti-Fascists, did not accept the Communist position. They held that, as long as India and other colonial lands were held in bondage by the Allied belligerents, the war could not be the people's war in spite of the fact of Russian involvement. The Indian Socialists therefore in 1942 wholeheartedly joined the "Quit India" movement against British Imperialism. The Communist Party, on the other hand, not only kept aloof from the national movement, but denounced it and helped the foreign government. Ever since, the gulf between the two parties has been widening. Not only were there differences on the question of national independence but also about the economic policies to be followed in India. The Indian Socialists were progressively being impressed by the factual situation in India and were also coming under the influence of Gandhiji's thought. In 1944, appeared two significant pamphlets, written by leading Socialists, Shri Masani and Profes-

sor Dantwalla. The one was *Socialism Reconsidered*, and the other *Gandhism Reconsidered*. Both these pamphlets showed that there was much in common between Gandhian and Socialist thought. The result was further modification in the attitude of Indian Socialists towards Marxism. There was also greater appreciation of Gandhian thought. So much was this the case that a section of the party was in derision called "Gandhian Socialists". Today, in theory and practice, Indian Socialists have little in common with the Communists. Many Marxian theories have been repudiated. The Socialists no more believe in Marxian materialism, his interpretation of history, his economic and ethical theories. However, we shall confine ourselves here to the discussion of the three main points we have stated before on which there are fundamental differences and also indicate points that are peculiar to Indian Socialism.

belief in moral values

In ethics, the Socialists believe in certain moral values. These hold good even in the political field. About this emphasis on moral values, it will not be out of place here to quote Shri Jai Prakash Narain. He says :

"For many years I have worshipped at the shrine of the goddess—dialectical materialism—which seemed to me intellectually more satisfying than any other philosophy. But...it has become patent to me that materialism of any sort robs man of the means to become truly human. In a material civilization man has no rational incentive

to be good... I feel convinced, therefore, that man must go beyond the material to find the incentive to goodness. As a corollary, I feel further that the task of social reconstruction cannot succeed under the inspiration of a materialist philosophy."

Further he says that :

"...Indeed, the very concepts of good and bad is supernatural or superorganic... There is no logic in materialism for the individual to endeavour deliberately to acquire and practise goodness. On the other hand, those who go beyond matter will find it difficult to justify non-good... It will be seen as an important corollary of this that only when materialism is transcended does individual man come into his own and become an end in himself."

In the matter of belief in moral values, the Indian Socialists have gone further than Western Socialists. In this they have been influenced by Indian spiritual thought as re-stated and re-emphasized by Gandhiji, specially in the idea that there can be no two sets of moral values, one to regulate social conduct and a different one for regulating political and group conduct. All human relations, whether social, political, economic, individual or group, must be guided by the same basic moral principles. Indian Socialists also accept Gandhiji's position that means cannot be subordinated to ends and that doubtful means employed to achieve worthwhile ends deflect the very ends from their original and real purpose.

faith in democracy

Believing in moral values, Indian Socialists have faith in representative and parliamentary democracy. They are against any totalitarian regime, even though it be temporary. They believe in the social individual. In totalitarian creeds, the individual has no existence apart from society. For Marx the individual is merely the *ensemble* of social relations and for the Fascist he is submerged in the national state. Believing in the individual, the Indian Socialists are against over-centralization both in the political and the economic fields. In politics, centralization leads to the rule of the bureaucrat and the expert inimical to individual liberty. Also, like the Liberals, the Indian Socialists have a healthy distrust of power. They believe with Lord Acton that power has the tendency to corrupt, and absolute power absolutely. A centralized democracy gives the executive very great power. This power is ever on the increase. Today the entire resources of the community, human and material, are under the control of the state. It possesses power which no tyrant in history ever had or dared to exercise. This inordinate power is exercised by a few individuals who are not infallible and yet they have become the arbiters of the fate of millions. This, as is plain today, is most dangerous. Therefore, following the lead of Gandhiji, the Indian Socialists favour the idea of devolution of political power. They believe that local self-governing units, democratically organized through *panchayats*, should enjoy the maximum of autonomy consistent with the overall unity of the country, its progress and prosperity.

Believing in moral values and democracy, the Indian Socialists repudiate the idea that insurrectionary violent action or civil or international wars can alone bring about a socialistic revolution. However, they do not think that parliamentary methods are the sole means for bringing about a revolution. These may, wherever necessary, be supplemented or substituted by direct action, but this action must be non-violent—civil resistance or *satyagraha*. This, when circumstances demand, may also be employed for the redress of local wrongs, social, economic or political. Gandhiji always held that civil resistance was a constitutional weapon as long as it eschewed violence. Indian Socialists accept for all practical purposes the Gandhian theory of non-violence. They also do not believe in a centrally organized world revolution. They feel that each country must work out its own programme towards Socialism, revolutionary or constitutional, according to its own circumstances and genius. No effort is therefore made, as in Communism, to create extra-territorial loyalties in other countries.

Indian Socialists no more believe in the Marxian economic interpretation of life and society. They also do not subscribe to the value theory of Marx. Their faith in the nationalization of all commerce and industry has been shaken after they have seen its working in Communist Russia. In effect, it leads to national socialism and state capitalism. Labour loses its right to organize itself for collective bargaining and for strike. Guided by Gandhiji's ideas and experiments in village and cottage industry, the Indian Socialists believe that a good deal of industry, specially the production of consumer goods, can and should be decentralized. This decentralization, to increase production

and to mitigate the drudgery of the village artisans, may be mechanized through the cheap supply of electric power, made available in every village home. Decentralized industry, wherever possible, must be organized on co-operative basis. Heavy industry necessary for modern life, that cannot be decentralized, may, as far as it is possible, be socialized, instead of being nationalized under the state. This socialized industry must be managed through boards representative of the interests concerned—management, labour, the consuming public and the state. Where private capital is called for, it too must be represented on the board of management.

idea of decentralized industry

The Socialists in India have accepted the idea of decentralized industry not only on theoretical grounds of economic equality but also on practical considerations. It is best suited to the conditions prevailing in India. India has a vast rural population unemployed and semi-employed. This cannot today be absorbed in big centralized and mechanized industry, whether in private or state hands. Moreover, being economically backward, India cannot easily create the vast capital that is at present required for organizing large-scale industry. It has also not the necessary trained technical personnel. The only hope of solving the problem of unemployment is therefore to make industrial schemes labour intensive rather than capital intensive. Decentralized industry also helps democracy. Independent artisans and peasant proprietors are as a class more independent and democratic in their outlook than the city proletariat.

In agriculture, the Indian Socialists, realizing the conditions of India, advocate independent peasant proprietors, with economic holdings, organized wherever possible on voluntary co-operative basis. For this purpose they advocate not only the abolition of zamindari system but a ceiling to be put on individual holdings. Any land saved after a ceiling has been imposed should be made available to landless labourers in the villages, who today eke out a precarious existence on account of low wages and want of remunerative employment. Fresh land brought under cultivation must also in the main be distributed to landless labourers.

pledged to non-violence

In international politics, the Indian Socialists pledged to non-violence are opposed to the world being divided as at present, in two power blocs, the Russian and the American. They believe in organizing a third bloc of such nations as are not affiliated to any of the two existing blocs and who believe in mutual co-operation and world peace. They therefore believe in strengthening the U.N.O. by making it democratic, so that each nation may be equally represented on it, and no nation subscribing to its objectives and willing to join the organization be denied the opportunity. They believe that the U.N.O. must have also a second chamber representative of the people of different nations, apart from their governments. This will pave the way towards some kind of world government for peacefully regulating international relations.

Indian Socialists have thus practically repudiated the philosophy of Marx and its interpretation by the

leaders of Bolshevik Russia. In several respects, as in the decentralization of industry and devolution of state power and the use of civil resistance (*satyagraha*), they have gone further than the Western Socialists. In other matters, the difference between Indian and Western Socialism is one of emphasis rather than of principle. For instance, Indian Socialism's emphasis on moral values, purity of means, democracy and non-violence is greater than that of Western Socialism.

Both Congress and Socialist parties in India have been, in their ideals and methods of work, influenced by Gandhiji. Gandhiji did not merely work for a political revolution transferring power from foreign to Indian hands. He worked for a comprehensive social revolution. He envisaged for India a new casteless and classless equalitarian social order, free from exploitation, economic, social and political. Believing thus, he initiated schemes of pioneering work in all directions even while the national liberation movement was in progress. Congress, after achieving power, has in practice, deviated from Gandhiji's comprehensive programme. However it has never in theory repudiated it. Today, having searched for fresh schemes in vain, it is being driven more and more towards Gandhiji's schemes of reconstruction compelled by the logic of the circumstances prevailing in the country. To take only one instance in the economic field, today it is realized by the Government that the question of the colossal unemployment in the country cannot be solved except through redistribution of land on equitable basis and decentralized industry. Circumstances have also obliged the Congress to enunciate its goal at the last Congress at Avadi more clearly as the establish-

ment of a socialistic pattern of society. It is moving forward with slow and hesitant steps. This is due to the composition of the Congress, containing as it does within its fold, as before independence, all interests in the country. This was an advantage to drive away foreign power from Indian soil. But the same composition, instead of helping social progress, hampers it. Before independence, membership of the Congress entailed sacrifice and suffering and earned the ill-will of the foreign masters. This kept the vested interests at a safe distance and discouraged the sycophant and the time-server from swelling the Congress ranks. Today there are no risks involved. It is therefore no wonder that the composition of the Congress, after independence, has worsened from the point of view of social change, though its numerical strength has vastly increased.

in opposition to Congress

Under such circumstances, a more homogeneous group with a clearer vision of the social goal to be achieved, working in opposition, is of great advantage to Indian democracy. Some thoughtful people even in the Congress admit the need of such an opposition group. It at least has the tendency to keep the ruling party in some trim.

Now-a-days one often hears of differing ideologies. But various parties in a democracy cannot have widely differing ideologies if they are to function constitutionally. The word ideology has different connotations. "Ideology" should have reference to certain fundamental values. But diametrically opposite values held by

different parties in a democracy would make the functioning of parliamentary government difficult. For instance, if a party believes that any fundamental change in society can be brought about only through violent revolutionary action, the existence of such a party will not make for the smooth functioning of democracy. Its participation in democratic institutions would be merely for opportunist purposes ; that is, it would employ the forms of democracy to defeat democracy itself. Again, if a party has extra-territorial loyalties, its functioning on the democratic plane will merely be an eye-wash. Democracy is based upon the fundamental idea of loyalty to the nation state. A party with extra-territorial loyalty will be, in spite of its democratic professions, a party of saboteurs and fifth columnists. It fails to recognize the fundamental unity of the national state. Again, taking the instance of India, if there are communal parties, they cannot be constitutional, for they cut at the very root of national unity and solidarity. They may be in our Parliament but their aims can only be fulfilled by destroying the idea of the organic unity of the state. Any fundamental difference in ideology, involving conflicting political values, is inimical to democratic functioning.

Praja Socialist Party

In India today there are four main recognized parties. These are the Congress, the Praja Socialists, the Communists and the Jana Sangh. Of these the Communist Party pins its faith to violent revolutionary action for revolutionary social changes. Its parliamentary activities are merely opportunist. The

Jana Sangh and allied communal organizations have no conception of the fundamental and organic unity of the nation. These parties cannot form true and genuine democratic oppositions. The really democratic parties today in India are therefore the Congress and the Praja Socialist parties. Some Socialists bewail the lack of clear-cut ideological differences, differences of fundamental political values, between the Congress and the P.S.P. They would like that these were irreconcilable differences. Therefore often they overemphasize the present differences and make them into ideological differences. The question of administrative inefficiency, corruption and nepotism, the tempo of change, or a gulf between profession and practice do not constitute ideological differences. Some Socialists do not realize that this absence of fundamental ideological differences instead of being a misfortune is a great advantage to democracy. Take, for instance, the Allahabad policy statement. There is only a slight difference between the economic schemes it recommends and those accepted by the Congress at least in theory. Even increased production of steel, as the pivotal point in economic reconstruction of the country, is accepted by the Congress and the Government are taking steps to increase steel production as quickly as possible. Therefore to suppose that democratic parties can be organized only on irreconcilable ideological differences, and to search for them by magnifying differences of tempo and emphasis, serves no useful purpose. It merely creates confusion. As the experience of Western countries shows, parliamentary democracy functions smoothly and best only when party differences on fundamentals are not irreconcilable.

If therefore the P.S.P. in India is properly organized and disciplined, it will serve a great purpose in the development of democracy in this country. If it fails to discharge its historical role, it will leave the field of opposition to the governing party, the Congress, free for the Communists or Communalists to exploit. The last (the Communalists), I believe, have no future in Free India, specially after the martyrdom of Gandhiji in the interest of communal unity. If that is so, the field of opposition will be left free for the Communist Party, neither wedded to democracy nor non-violence, and having uncertain national loyalties, whenever there is conflict between national interests and those of Russia and China. It is therefore no wonder that the press in India, generally favourable to the Congress, has viewed with apprehension the disunity and want of discipline that today threaten the existence of the Praja Socialist Party.

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role of secular humanism

Minoo Masani and Nissim Ezekiel

THE word "secular" has no status worth mentioning in philosophy. Modern democratic states are said to be secular when they dissociate themselves officially from an organized religion. Thus India is theoretically secular or, more correctly, non-denominational ; while Pakistan has chosen to seek (if not to find) an Islamic form of government and, by implication, to foster a way of life in accordance with the principles of a historically established religion. The United Kingdom is formally Christian but is largely secular in its constitutional procedures and neutral as between different ways of life within a democratic-liberal framework. The Soviet Government is, in its constitution, committed to non-interference in religious questions but in practice carries out militantly a programme against established faiths and for the religion of materialism it seeks to substitute. It interprets secularism in its most extreme form but is really identified with Marxist materialism and is not therefore an illustration of secularism in practice.

In the United Kingdom secular organizations exist to oppose the belief in supernaturalism; the necessary connection between religion and ethics which is insisted upon by the religious; the influence of religion

on human institutions, which is regarded as pernicious; and the connection between religion and the state which is denounced as perpetuating the "out-dated" beliefs of the former. Secularism wages a ceaseless war against what it calls "superstition", more or less identical with established religion. It supports reason against faith and dogma ; naturalistic against religious ethics ; social, biological and utilitarian sanctions *versus* supernatural ones ; and science or scientific beliefs *versus* the authoritarian, intuitional or institutional. Secularism treats ethics as an empirical science and some branches of it stress this role so greatly that they are organized as ethical societies. Again, some of these ethical societies have a greater "appreciation" of religion than others, to the extent of incorporating in their social practices ritual and ceremony borrowed from Christianity.

Since the word humanism is claimed by a wide variety of theories (few of which need be dignified as philosophies), it is essential to define it as precisely as possible for the purposes of this argument. For instance, it will not do to designate as humanistic a view of life which is avowedly oblique or indirect in its relation to human welfare. The criterion for the use of the word is the location of that interest—it must be *central*—and the mode of its operation—it must be *activist*. The humanist is traditionally committed to working for honesty, decency, and altruistic endeavour in public life; but it is also his claim that these virtues follow logically from his view of life so that if more people shared that view there would necessarily be more honesty and decency than before.

Humanism is on the side of the individual against the demands of the state, in favour of a liberal education against mere vocational training and, generally speaking, acts as a corrective to all extremist and formalistic tendencies in philosophy, morals and politics. It is essentially a critical tendency of moderation, drawing attention to objective facts, striving to focus thought on social needs and to create a strong feeling for the amelioration of human suffering. It is not an accident that the word altruism was coined by Auguste Comte, who also first used the word positive to oppose the metaphysical. At the core of humanism is faith in human intelligence and its products which occasionally becomes a belief in the perfectibility of Man, giving rise to a host of Utopian social schemes and formulae.

what is secular humanism?

Having described the two terms in our title, we may now proceed to link them. Secular humanism is presumably opposed to religious humanism and invokes its opposition. The quarrel is over religion, and neither party can afford to give it up without considerably weakening its own position. We take it that anti-religious and rationalistic propaganda is an essential feature of secular humanism, its destructive part. Constructively, there may not be much difference between the two but the secularist is at pains to prove the independence of his humanism from the sanctions of his religious counterpart. The late M. N. Roy made a distinction between speculative idealism (the traditional philosophy of the schools) and practical idealism which he derived from his own thorough-going materialist theory of the universe.

Mr. Roy's Radical Humanist Movement is the only movement in India specifically calling itself humanist, the term radical being derived from Mr. Roy's political life but not irrelevant to his humanism. There are, besides, rationalist groups which associate themselves with free thought and humanism in a general way all over the world. The humanism of these groups is often in inverse proportion to their atheism. A Rationalist Association with its headquarters in Madras is certainly more atheistic than humanist, the tone of its propaganda being militant, its "exposure" of priests and "superstitious" believers often narrow and intolerant. Some sort of rationalistic tendencies have existed from time to time in Maharashtra. In Bengal, rationalism is inextricably mixed with "revolutionary" politics and in the South with theories of race and political separatism. There is a little humanism only in the Maharashtra rationalists, of whom the most authentic and distinguished modern representative is Tarkateerth Laxman Shastri Joshi. On the whole, it cannot be said that humanism as an official credo has been accepted along with the name by many in this country or even by any small but highly influential group. In this, it shares the fate of humanism in all other countries.

It must not be concluded from this, however, that humanism is a negligible factor today in India and the world. It is only as an official credo with varying doctrinaire boundaries that humanism appears to be weak. As a broad, general outlook and as an implicit attitude, it is fairly widespread and is regarded, outside Marxist circles, on the one hand, and organized religion, on the other, as the "philosophy of the future".

Perhaps the most remarkable evidence of this is a volume of essays published by UNESCO, after studies and inquiries lasting over four years, under the title : *Inter-relations of Cultures—their Contribution to International Understanding*. At the conclusion of this book is a statement intended to be an outcome of the studies which precede it, prepared by a special international committee of experts. This document is revealingly entitled “Humanism of Tomorrow and the Diversity of Cultures”.

Even more striking is the fact that a volume published by UNESCO of a series of papers read at a conference in New Delhi in 1951, on the moral and intellectual ties that unite Eastern and Western peoples, is entitled : *Humanism and Education in East and West*. How far the participants in these discussions would subscribe to secularism as a systematic attack on religious practices is a moot point. Though there is no odium today attached to secularist propaganda, particularly if it is independent of politics, humanism is more respectable, and the secular humanist can get away with his secularism by emphasizing his humanist creed. Even so, the secular part of his ideology would be deprecated and barely tolerated.

From this description of the situation, the strength and weakness of secular humanism in India can easily be estimated. As an organized movement its role in the functioning of Indian democracy is small, but its theoretical possibilities as an implied attitude are endless.

secular humanism and democracy

Politically, secular humanism is by its very nature a supporter of democracy. It claims in fact to provide what it calls the philosophical foundations of democracy as a way of life, the only view of democracy which it considers worth championing. Its most valuable function is persistently to emphasize the spirit and content of democracy as contrasted with its outward forms and official institutions, to insist on the educative role of democracy as against its use as a method of arriving at decisions, and to link it up ineluctably with ideals of social justice and general welfare. It draws attention repeatedly to the rights of the minorities and places limits on the power of the majority, thus pointing out the necessity of checks and balances in the working of majority rule.

Democratic freedoms can in fact be justified, as pointed out by Walter Lippmann in his book, *The Public Philosophy*,¹ "by adhering to the postulate that there is a rational order of things in which it is possible, by sincere inquiry and rational debate, to distinguish the true and the false, the right and the wrong, the good which leads to the realization of human ends and the evil which leads to destruction and to the death of civility".

A case in point is Mr. Roy's Radical Humanist Movement. It visualizes People's Councils which will serve as links between parliamentary institutions and the electorate, functioning from day to day in order to educate the masses on the political issues of the

¹ Little Brown & Company, 1955, p. 134.

moment. These Councils are said to be a means of "organizing" democracy. Whatever may be the difficulties of carrying out such a proposal, it shows a keen awareness of the need to make democracy an organic expression of the people's will. It is intended to eliminate as far as possible the atomized individual, lonely, helpless and subject to the impact of innumerable forces which make him confused and incapable of exercising his voting rights intelligently. The great merit of such proposals, even when they are not carried out (perhaps they cannot be), is to put a new value on the individual voter and to endow him with the highest dignity in the working of democracy.

Is there any historical connection between secularism and democracy in India ? The question is not raised to be answered (or to be avoided) but with the object of mentioning some of the special difficulties which beset it. The secularist, like all other ideologists, will attempt to buttress his faith with "evidence" from history, so prodigal in its support of contradictory facts ! He will pick on Kapila and Kannada as the supreme embodiments of Indian philosophy, since they were materialists and "materialism is the only possible philosophy" (M. N. Roy). Unquestionably loyal to science and democracy as arbiters of human destiny and as criteria of progress, they will discover anything resembling them in the past to be dependent upon the development of the outlook they champion. In statements which are properly speaking examples of scepticism (rarely thorough-going), they claim to identify the continuous current of atheism in Indian thought. And piety, toleration, benevolence,

saintliness, are taken to be incipient forms of humanism. In a way they are: any tradition or ideology claims belongs to it if it genuinely draws inspiration from that tradition. But the dangers of a false historical perspective should not be minimized. The historical extravagances of the secularist have to be curbed, but that is not to dampen his spirit against future endeavours. Indeed, we are inclined to believe that the secularist can well afford to give up his claims on the past without weakening his role in making India's future. It is this role which we shall discuss in the rest of our article. Since democracy is the object of our concern (in relation to the competing faiths in modern India), a similar stand of not laying claims on the past may be advocated in respect of democracy also.

The view closest to reality is that of Humayun Kabir who has stated that in India democracy always worked within strictly defined limits. "It could function in the village where personal relations softened the sharpness of abstract thought. Outside the range of immediate and intimate contacts, it remained a mere idea. The vastness of the country accommodated village democracy alongside autocratic imperialism. The European emphasis on institutional democracy therefore brought something new to the Indian consciousness."²

Secular humanism can provide an excellent cultural basis for Indian democracy because it is the

² *Our Heritage*, 1946.

avowed enemy of the irrational. Even religious thinkers sometimes support a rationalist attack on the excesses of religion because they see no other way of uprooting superstitious practices. Sri Aurobindo Ghose, for instance, advocated a strong dose of materialism for the Indian people, though he would have liked to see it superseded as soon as its function is performed. This certainly is an extraordinary testament of rationalism's power against certain human tendencies, but it is also a sign of tremendous faith in the human mind's eventual need for a spiritualist faith. Be that as it may, the secular mind proves that the democratic process is an extension of reason to the problems of political power. It denies that there are any other solutions, particularly those offered by ideological absolutes or personal domination. For humanism, democracy is a regulative ideal, but the ultimate authority is reason. It is therefore the most astringent critic of democracy in practice and the most ardent supporter of democracy in theory. It does not believe in democracy as a necessary evil or accept it because there is no tolerable alternative. It positively chooses democracy as the political expression of its naturalistic creed. *All democrats are not humanists but all humanists are of necessity democrats.* The point of emphasizing this relationship between the two is to give confidence to the humanists (their meagre numbers deprive them of it) and to reveal to them their ideological resources in championing or criticizing democracy.

tasks of humanism today

The argument so far has deliberately been on an abstract level. It is time now to specify some of the particular jobs secular humanism is called upon to perform today in a crucial stage of Indian democracy. Paradoxically, the first task is abstract—to develop itself comprehensively as a workable alternative in a highly competitive field. It is not as yet sufficiently developed to be considered a serious loyalty. Where it claims to be comprehensive it has become a system, and where it is only an attitude it has not created values powerful enough to impinge on the intellectual life of this country. The real impact is from the liberal, democratic, rationalist and humanist currents of thought from abroad. Our secularism is not indigenous and shows no signs of developing into an independent force. It does not speak the language of the people as, for example, *Bhoodan* does, and so when it criticizes *Bhoodan*, Gandhism, missionary activities, religious observances by feeble non-believers, and so on, it fails to communicate its views to either the people or the intellectuals. Thus isolated, and finding expression almost exclusively in its own journals (circulating more or less among the converted), it becomes insular and anaemic. Its inability to set an intellectual standard commanding respect can be proved by glancing through a few issues of *The Rationalist*, monthly journal of the Rationalist Association of India. Unless secular humanism in India rises to the status of a philosophy, it cannot hope to attract adherents in large numbers or, even on a small scale, demonstrate its power qualitatively.

Another function of secular humanism is to differentiate itself from and even oppose the secularism of the totalitarian threat. The peculiarity of that secularism is that it is generally swallowed along with the rest of Marxist dogma, and for its sake. Few know what are the full implications of Marxism when they accept it, generally through some specific political activity. Later, they become atheists overnight, so to speak, having found atheism a necessary supplement of their political credo. Humanist secularism, on the other hand, treats the question of theism *versus* atheism as a major question for the mind of man and regards the process which leads to individual answers as the most valuable part of its discipline. Besides, communist secularism is based on a theory of dialectics and a dogmatic, apocalyptic view of history which is at variance with the humane outlook of genuine secularism. *The triumph of Marxist secularism would mean the death of humanist secularism.* By facing its enemy, humanism would not be vulgarized into politics but made alive by its contact with the realities of our time.

Incidentally, it has been noted that wherever a mind has been influenced to some extent by humanism in any form it has remained perpetually immune to the totalitarian plea. This leads to the view that perhaps humanism is essentially a prophylactic force—even when it cannot win the minds of men it can at least prevent them from going over to the other camp. There is perhaps no more valuable ideological function to be performed in India today.

stand against traditional religions

Secularism involves the belief that the state, morals, education and cultural activities should be independent of religion. When humanistic, it can be quite unworldly and spiritual but it still has to take a stand against traditional religious faiths. In the context of democracy, the question is whether this destructive role is worth playing. If the existing faiths are destroyed would it not, psychologically, if not logically, lead to a weakening of such moral values as are bound up with those faiths? No doubt it may be urged that moral values can be supported at the same time as religious faith is combated, but is this really a feasible proposition? Is not the substitute foundation which secular humanism provides for the moral impulse too abstruse and intellectual, too far removed from the emotional roots which give it life and power? Though this cannot be discussed here, it must be pointed out that nothing less than the integrity of the human personality depends upon the answers to these questions.

The fortunes of democracy in some parts of Western Europe pose a peculiar challenge about the function of organized religious forces in times of crisis. From time to time they seem to act as a stabilizing factor in opposition, and as defenders of constitutional government when in power. Austria, for instance, has a Catholic ruling party. In Italy, the Church is unquestionably a massive obstacle to the totalitarians, and in France the M.R.P.'s influence has been frequently constructive. How far does secular propaganda working against religious faith undermine the strength of such forces for democracy?

Can the moral principles so essential to the free way of life be made to prevail if they are discredited and "dismissed as superstition, as obscurantism, as meaningless metaphysics, as reactionary, as self-seeking rationalizations?"

The men who rise against freedom are often those who suffer from an emptiness of mind and soul. Walter Lippmann³ has well described the process :

"They have become the 'lonely crowd' that Riesman has described. They are Durkheim's atomic mass. They are Toynbee's proletarians who are 'of' but not 'in' the community they live in; for they have 'no stake' in that community beyond the fact of its physical existence. Their 'true hallmark... is neither poverty nor humble birth but is the consciousness--and the resentment that this consciousness inspires--of being disinherited.' They are, as Karl Jaspers says, men dissolved into 'an anonymous mass' because they are 'without an authentic world, without provenance of roots', without, that is to say, any belief and faith that they can live by."

So long as nothing is done to stem the mounting tide of agnosticism and the cynicism it breeds, can there be any doubt as to how the struggle is likely to end if, as Lippmann poses the problem : "it lies between those who, believing, care very much—and those who, lacking belief cannot care very much".

Another thinker puts it thus : "One can without difficulty note that even as the intellectual lost faith,

³ *The Public Philosophy*, by Walter Lippmann, (Little Brown & Company), 1955, p. 111.

the common man lost hope. God departed from the room in which the professors, the research workers, the *improvers* and the artists were talking—departed silently and ominously. And the worker, doomed to the treadmill of proletarianism, felt that only those spokesmen for the contemporary mind could do anything to bring about his liberation who talked aggressively in terms of the here and now".¹

This argument is not meant to support the belief that organized religious forces in Western Europe today are natural and permanent champions of democracy. The point is made only to indicate the possible consequences of secularist effort at a time when democracy is in danger all over the world. It is taken for granted that democracy cannot be saved by submitting the secular power of the state to the absolutes of a Church nor by extending the range of a secular state's rights against the influence of the Church. In this field, as on the material plane, it is a monopoly that needs to be guarded against. History teaches that a free society has always needed the teacher, the philosopher and the preacher to act as a check on the prince, the politician and the policeman. The problem is well posed by Walter Lippmann²: "There is little room for freedom under the absolute power of a totalitarian church which dominates the secular force of the government, and none under a totalitarian state which has absorbed the spiritual

¹ *Religion Behind the Iron Curtain*, by George N. Shuster, (The Macmillan Company, New York), 1954, p. 271.

² *The Public Philosophy*, by Walter Lippmann, (Little Brown & Company), 1955, p. 154.

powers into the secular. The best that is possible in the human condition, and in the world as it is, is that the state and the churches should each be too strong to be conquered, not strong enough to have unlimited dominion. It is in the righting of the balance between them that reason escapes from the oppressions of excessive power, and can realize its opportunities".

The fundamental problem is whether the *present* role of religion and religious parties is wholly to be discounted in the struggle for the preservation of freedom.

The situation in India is in many ways different, and specifically religious-political movements are associated with reaction. The slogan of the Hindu Mahasabha is "Hinduise politics and militarise Hindustan". The various movements for reforming Hinduism are in a weak and muddle-headed state, though some of them have antecedents which command respect. The minority religions, such as Christianity, on the other hand, give specific guidance to their followers against the dictatorial heresy. It is difficult to say whether the over-all picture of religious support to democracy will be such in the near future as to necessitate a truce between secularism and its principal enemy. The guiding principle should be the defence of democracy, it is urged, not the ideological triumph over organized religion.

beyond humanism

A word may be said in conclusion about the adequacy of secular humanism as a credo or philosophy of life. Much can be written on this subject but it would be irrelevant to the needs of democracy. The

relevant questions are whether it provides sufficient incentives to the good life, both on the personal and the social level, whether it supports or is indifferent to a rational order of society, whether it opens up reasonable perspectives in a dynamic historical situation, whether it aids or is a hindrance to the development of the individual human personality. On these counts it can be confidently said that secular humanism, is, at least in its aims and methods, a supporter of desirable values.

The only obstacle to an acceptance of this view is that the creed is limited in its popular appeal and presupposes a high degree of intellectual and moral maturity. It places a responsibility on the individual for determining not only what is right and what is wrong but also the standards of right and wrong without being bound to any traditional authority. As Erich Fromm puts it : "In humanistic ethics, man himself is both the norm giver and the subject of the norms, their formal source of regulative agency; and their subject-matter."⁶ This responsibility is often too heavy for the individual and results in the "fear of freedom" which the same author has so ably analysed. Besides, the problem arises whether the *ultimate* satisfaction of man's nature is not to be found in something *transcending* man—whether secular humanism can fulfil the deepest spiritual yearnings of man in relation to the cosmos. If not, then it can be the creed of only a few cultivated individuals and that too only as a stage in their philosophical evolution. It may well be true, as

⁶ *Man for Himself*, by Routledge and Kegan Paul, (1949), p. 9.

the religious say, that the humanists, as they grow older, look for something beyond humanism and arrive at religion. Irving Babbitt, who denies the validity of this belief, nevertheless admits: "It has been a constant experience of man in all ages that mere rationalism leaves him unsatisfied. Man craves in some sense or other of the word an enthusiasm that will lift him out of his merely rational self."⁷ This line of thought takes us far from our limited universe of discourse into the field of metaphysics at the borders of which it is necessary to halt.

⁷ Quoted by T. S. Eliot in his *Collected Essays*, p. 477.

4

indigenous cultural foundations

M. B. Niyogi

C. DELISLE BURNS described democracy as a word having many meanings and some emotional colour. For some it is a flag, or the call of a trumpet ; for others it is an obsolete mythology which has undesirable connections with Capitalism and Imperialism. I believe Indian democracy makes no claim one way or the other ; and assuredly, it never intended to use it as a war cry in defence of the so-called free world. India adopted democracy in the fervent hope that it would enable her to work out her own destiny in the spirit of her ancient benedictory verse which starts with the words : *Sarve Sukhinah Santu* (May all be happy).

implications of Indian democracy

The term 'Indian Democracy' may signify that which is set out on paper, or that which is actually functioning, or the form it is likely to take in future. Briefly, the constitutional declaration of the right of the individual to Liberty, Equality and Property combined with the provision of services for the general good includes the element of democracy. The declared intention of the party in power is to make it assume a socialistic pattern. What bearing will it have on

the fundamental rights of Liberty, Equality and Property assured to the individual by the Constitution ?

The revolutions in America (1776) and in France (1789) had been inspired by certain political theories in which the concepts of the individual and compact loomed large, and came to be regarded as the fundamental principles underlying human social organization. India had no such theories ; her one aim was to emancipate herself from the foreign yoke. Her struggle, however, was essentially that of a constitutional opposition seeking to capture the reins of office. True to its spirit, Britain parted with power in favour of the people of India granting them full liberty to adopt any form of government that suited their genius and interests. As India has shared life with Britain for nearly two hundred years, it was but natural that she should adopt the Government of India Act, 1935, as the basis of her Constitution, with such modifications as were necessitated by her choice of a Republican form.

In the French Revolution of 1789, the attention of the leaders was wholly concentrated on the overthrow of the political authority of the King, the Priest and the Nobility ; and the power which they wrested from them was by them interpreted wholly in political terms with no idea of disturbing the social order of their day. The internal contradiction between Liberty and Equality, then viewed merely as political concepts, came to be exposed with the passage of time. The exercise of Liberty which appeared to be just in the political field led to palpable injustice in the social sphere. Individualism, called also Benthamism, was, in its way, useful as elevating the political and social

status of the individual. But in the economic zone, it had disastrous consequences flowing from the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, and by 1900 it lost its hold. The Trade Disputes Act, 1906, The Old Age Pensions Act, 1908, The National Insurance Act, 1911, and The Trade Union Act, 1913, and other laws illustrate the progress towards Collectivism. The antithesis between the individual and the state could hardly maintain its ground.

Was this democracy, "No," said Dicey, the great authority on Constitutional Law, in 1914, in these words¹: "The ideal of democracy is government for the good of the people, by the people and in accordance with the wish of the people ; the idea of Collectivism is government for the good of the people by experts or officials who know or think they know what is good for the people better than any non-official person or the mass of the people themselves." On the other hand, all political parties were unanimous in holding that freedom of speech, and freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention were the essential characteristics of democracy and safeguards against authoritarianism. They further agreed that the state had become the means of providing services—not only Armed Forces or the Police but also social services such as education, public health, housing, medical care; insurance against unemployment, old age, widowhood.

In Russia 'economic democracy' had to be brought about by means of a revolution (1917), and Communism was the product. The Declaration of 1918 described

¹ *Law and Opinion in England*, Second Edition, pp. lxxiii.

its fundamental aims as follows : "To suppress all exploitation of man by man, to abolish for ever the division of society into classes, ruthlessly to suppress all exploitation in all countries". This spells abolition of private property in land, and in the means of production, and establishment of workers' control over industry.

Sir A. Toynbee, in his Reith Lectures (1952), remarked : "In the West where Communism has arisen, this new creed was a heresy. It was the Western criticism of the West's failure to live up to her own Christian principles in the economic and social life of this professedly Christian society".

President Roosevelt, by placing freedom from want and freedom from fear side by side with freedom of speech and freedom of worship, imparted to the word freedom a wider signification so as to include social and economic rights of man. These rights are now incorporated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948.

Thus it is evident that democracy survives, in the old sense, in freedom of speech and freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention ; but in its new and extended sense embraces the whole field of social welfare. In England, democracy took this benevolent form in an evolutionary way.

The Indian democracy has to be understood and interpreted in the light of these developments. They present the individual in a new light. He or she is no longer one that stands isolated from others like an atom in physics, which combines with other atoms

to make a community, but that the individual is an integral part of it. It is by understanding the individual in this wider sense that mutual aid and co-operation are possible not only among individuals but nations *inter se*. That is the way to ensure happiness of all and attain peace in the world.

Indian democracy in action

Is the Indian democracy living up to the principles enshrined in the Constitution ? Abroad, India's part in the restoration and development of goodwill among nations is well known. At home, her sincerity is attested by the large-scale constructional activities in progress in various parts of the country. The Community Projects and National Extension Services have succeeded in arousing the masses from their slumber of centuries, which was mainly due to foreign domination. That they are readily co-operating with the official agencies in ameliorating their own lot in the rural areas is demonstrated by the published figures. Up to the end of 1954, they contributed in cash, kind and labour Rs. 7·48 crores, while the Government spent Rs. 13·48 crores ; and 11,886 miles of *kutcha* road and 1,145 miles of *pucca* road came to be constructed in the whole of India. The movement of *Bhoodan*, *Sampattidan*, *Shramadan* (gifts of land, wealth and labour) initiated by Shri Vinoba Bhave under the name of *Yajna* (sacrifice) has touched the hearts of the people and is gradually moulding public opinion. He has so far received 40 lakhs of acres of land, including 150 entire villages in Orissa State.

The philosophy underlying the movement is that those who possess more than they want are trustees

of the society in respect of what they hold above their needs. This is in accordance with an oft-repeated Sanskrit verse to the effect that the actual wealth of one is that which he uses for his enjoyment or charity, and the rest he holds as a custodian for someone's benefit.

The recent report (Jan. 1955) of the Bharat Sevak Samaj throws a hopeful light on the progress of the social service work in the country. In the course of three years, the Samaj has set up active branches in 30 Pradeshas and in 229 out of the total 328 districts in Bharat. Associated with it are 4 social service organizations at the all-India level, and 99 similar organizations at the Pradesh level. Of its 9-point programme, it has been concentrating on the under-mentioned seven : (a) local development works, (b) planning and economic information, (c) sanitation and health, (d) students' and youth camps, (e) co-operatives, (f) cultural activities, and (g) women and child welfare. That proves that there is a will to work the democracy as it is understood today. Rome was not built in a day.

The elections have shown that the masses are not lacking in political interest. It is true that there is no effective opposition so far ; but the recent impressive success of some P.S.P. candidates against the Congress, tends to show that the masses have begun to think.

All these are mentioned not with a view to glorify the people of India but to indicate that the Leviathan has begun to stir and is getting to move on its own legs. It raises the hope that India will move towards

the goal of Democratic Socialism inspired by the idea of the common good (*sarve sukinah santu*).

indigenous democratic foundations

Now I turn to the traditional and historical aspects of the subject, involving the consideration of the cultural tradition indigenous to India on which democracy may be founded. I feel as if I am faced with the query, "Can new wine be put in old bottle ? Will it not break and the new wine run out ?

Indeed, such a query would be highly pertinent at this moment, deriving, as it does, its significance from the famous saying of Lord Jesus. But it appears to me that Lord Jesus himself, were he in India, would not have put the question. He who would affirmatively say : "I and my Father are one" (*aham brahma brahmasmi*) ; "I am in my Father, and ye in me and I in you" (*mayi te teshuchapyaham*), would put the query only to the Jews, for the reasons to be found in the sequel.

What is culture ? It is as easy to ask as it is difficult to answer. The one which readily comes to mind are the words of an early Christian saint, "If not asked, I know ; if you ask, I know not". In the words of the *Upanishad*, "It is not understood by those who (say they) understand it ; it is understood by those who (say they) understand it not". Some thinkers distinguish Culture from Civilization. Culture denotes how man makes himself and Civilization, how he makes the world around him. Culture in this sense, may be equated with Tradition which a man born into it unconsciously imbibes, and which shapes his sense of values.

I interpret the word "indigenous" as referring to the Hindu ; for, as Dr. Masacarenhas says, "What distinguishes a Hindu from the mere Indian is that the Hindu is the only child of Mother India who never disowns his parent".²

It is undeniable that there is an invisible bond which imparts unity to the apparently mass (as some foreigners said) of human beings known as Hindus. What is it ? Let Rene Guenon answer.³ He says : "Hindu unity rests entirely on the acknowledgement of a certain tradition which also embraces social order...the tradition in question is in no wise a religious one as in Islam, but in a more purely intellectual and especially a metaphysical tradition...metaphysics, being of the universal order is thereby essentially supra-individual...even circumstances of time and space...can only affect the outward expression but not the essence of the doctrine...supra-individual is supra-rational order...which does not in any way mean the irrational ; metaphysics cannot contradict reason, but it stands above reason...that is the difference between metaphysics and what generally goes by the name of philosophy in the West". Holmes says, "Western thought has, from the beginning of things allowed itself to be dominated by the ideas of the average man...It is to the genius of one small nation that the West owes, for good or for evil, its spiritual standpoint. Jehova, the God of Israel, is accepted as the Lord Paramount of the Universe by the greater part of the Western world...The genius

² *Quintessence of Hinduism* (1951), p. 44.

³ *Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines* (1945), pp. 84, 114, 116 and 118-19.

of Israel was essentially practical.. For he had no philosophy, in the deeper sense of the word, to sustain him.. His philosophy was of the average man".⁴

What impresses the Hindu are not facts, but ideas. Ideas are above the limitations of space and time. They can be neither old nor new. If an idea appeals to the Hindu's sense of values, he looks back to see if he has something like it in his own tradition. If he finds a parallel, he does not regard his acquaintance with the idea (which the average man may say is new) as recognition (*pratyabhigna*) as Plato would say. However, if it is an idea which is not found in his tradition, but is of sound value, then the Hindu adopts it as if it had once been in his tradition but somehow got lost. This is the doctrine of what is known as *utsanna veda*. It may be criticised as idealism, but has it made the Hindu less practical ? If so, how could he have survived the storms and stresses of centuries which were by no means always propitious ? Guided by such a tradition the Hindu enters history.

India's foreign trade goes back to 3000 B.C.; and Will Durant says that "Europe looked upon the Hindus as experts in almost every line of manufacture".⁵ Hegel wrote : "India as a land of desire forms an essential element in General History. From the most ancient times onwards, all nations have directed their wishes and longings to gaining access to this land of marvels, the most costly which the earth presents, treasures of nature and *treasures of wisdom*".⁶

⁴ *The Creed of Buddha*, pp. 205, 209 and 210.

⁵ *Story of Civilization*, p. 479.

⁶ *Philosophy of History*, (Will Book Company, 1944), p. 142.

India has always believed in peaceful relation with the world around. The mighty Emperor Asoka believed in *dharma vijaya* (*dharma conquest*). He sent out spiritual missions to the West (see Edict XIII) "which prepared the soil from which both Christianity and Islam afterwards sprang".⁷ Up to the 10th century A.D., Indian missionaries had been going to China. Nevertheless, the spread of Indian culture is said to be 'prehistorical'. Why ? Because the "diffusion of Indian culture...presents no political action...no foreign conquests"...“it is the necessary fate of Asiatic Empires to be subjected to Europeans”."⁸

If democracy means liberty of thought and conscience, equality and brotherhood, can there be any better instance of democratic spirit shown in history than that of India ? Democracy is but a form of government—rule by the many as opposed to the rule by one or a few. But whether it is good or evil will be judged by the extent to which it promotes the good of the many, at home and abroad. So said Aristotle. Respect for others' rights is the very basis of democracy ; it is supplied by the golden rule. That exists in both negative and positive forms in the Indian tradition also. It is expressed as : *atmanah prakikulani paresham na samacharet* (negative); *yad yad atmani iccheta, tatparasyapi chintayet* (positive). Of the two, the negative command is easier and more practical, since what is to be eliminated are bad mental states. India believed in reason as a practical guide in life ; even scriptural authority is to be subjected to logical

⁷ Havel's *History of Aryan Rule in India* (Harrap), p. 100.

⁸ Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, p. 142.

analysis (c.p. *Srawana, Nanana*—Brihadaranyaka Upanishad). Buddha encouraged rational thinking (see *Kalama Sutta*), and detached morality from all connection with deity. Hence *Dharma* stands in its own right as the Ruler of the world. In India this is an important psychological factor which favours the growth of democracy.

The question now arises : "Are there any concrete instances of democratic practice in Indian history ? If the same question were to be put to England, what will be the answer ? England had been conquered and ruled by the Romans. After them, England embraced Christianity, and remained under the heel of the Vicar of Christ who asserted *plentidudo potestatis* : and when *sacerdotium* was overthrown by *imperium*, the king became the Vicar of God. When the iron of both the heels became intolerable, the English people executed their king. Then there was the effort to discover a new source of power, and that was found in Nature. The Natural Right of man bundled out the Divine Right of the king and Nature expelled God out of the Cosmos. What guided the English in their search for a source of human rights ? The thought of Greece and Rome, which underlay the democratic constitutions of their city states. These supplied the model for the representative types of national democracies of the modern world.

What was the 'indigenous cultural foundation' in England or France in 1688 and 1789 ? The psychological factor of revolt against Divine Right was there which on its positive side showed the will to build up democracy on the doctrine of Natural Right ; but was

there any concrete instance of a sovereign democratic state in their history ? No, but the element of democracy existed in the local areas like the 'shires' and 'hundreds'.

Now, let us glance at Indian history. That India had sovereign democratic city states is a well-attested fact. Prof. Rhys Davids, in his *Buddhist India*, gives a clear account of democratic republics such as Sakyas, Licchavis, Kolis, Videhas, Mallas, Morias, Mulis, Bhaggas. The judicial and administrative business was carried out in public assemblies in the common mote-hall (*santhagara*). The single chief bore the title of Raja which was something corresponding to the Roman Consul or Greek Archon. References to them occur in the Buddhist, Jain, Brahminical and Greek literature. In the *Aitareya Bramhana* (VII. 3. 4) the *Uttar Kurus* and *Madras* are described : "The whole consecrated to Rulership". In the *Shanti Parva* of *Mahabharata*, they appear as invincible states in which the rule of equality was observed (*sadrushah sarvejatyakulena*). The Republics were known as *Jana Rajya* which word is now in vogue with reference to the Indian Republic.

It was presumably on this model that Buddha formed his *Bhikshu Sangha*. Dr. Oldenberg and Dr. Davids were the first to point out that the Sangha was founded on democratic principles. The latter, in his Hibbert Lectures (1881) observed : "The Order was a kind of Republic in which all proceedings were settled by resolutions, agreed upon in regular meeting of its members which were held subject to the observance of certain established regulations and the use of certain forms of words. These forms and resolutions

passed were called *kamma-vachas*. In the Mahavagga and Chullavagga are to be found the rules relating to the forms and resolutions, to be moved in the assembly. There was a rule of quorum. Differences of opinion were resolved by vote of the majority. There were methods prescribed for counting of votes ; and voting by ballot was known.⁹

Later on, with the emergence of the idea of *Sarva-Bhauma* (Imperialism) the Republics disappeared as they did in Greece and Rome. But in practice the democratic form of self-government survived in the rural areas. The village communities were the units of local government. South Indian inscriptions of the 10th century indicate that the General Assembly used to divide itself into various committees such as garden committee, tank committee, committee of justice, etc. The mode of election to these committees are also found described. There was no prohibition against women being members.

I may also mention certain private arbitration courts known as *Pooga*, *Shreni* and *Kula*. The first was an association of persons drawn from various castes, following different professions. The second was of the type of guilds of horse-dealers, betel-sellers, weavers and shoe-makers. The third was a collection of individuals, related as agnates or cognates.¹⁰

It is interesting to note that the rural communes survived up to the British times. Elphinstone wrote¹¹:

⁹ *Hindu Polity*, by N. C. Nandyopadhyaya, p. 252.

¹⁰ This, one would find in the *Narada* and *Yajnavalkya Smritis* and *Mitakshara*.

¹¹ *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. III (Rama-krishna Century Edition), p. 306.

"The townships remain entire and are indestructible atoms from the aggregate of which the most extensive Indian empires are composed". He quotes from Metcalfe's report : "They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down ; revolution succeeds revolution...but village communities remain the same". These village organizations are revived now by the establishment of *gram-panchayats* and *nyaya panchayats*.

I may, in passing, also refer to the system of land-holding. The tiller of the soil was treated as owner. This was the system (*ryotwari*) where the Muslim influence did not penetrate. The big proprietary zamin-daris were created by the Muslim rulers for political purposes.¹² The evidence from the Punjab sheds light on their original nature as well as on the system of self-government that prevailed under the Hindu tradition. There were three classes of land-tenure, *viz.*, *Zamindari*, *Pattidari* and *Bhayyachari*. In the *zamindari* system the village land was absolutely held in common and the whole proceeds of the land were put in a common coffer and divided among the family heads. In the *pattidari*, the land was divided into plots for separate cultivation and enjoyment, subject to redistribution of plots. In the *bhayyachari*, the land was separately held by exclusive owners. Thus both the individual and collective forms of ownership were known and practised by the people in accordance with custom. Even in Madhya Pradesh where the Bhonsla Raja claimed ownership of all land by virtue of the right of conquest, the *patel* and the cultivators acted

¹² *Hindu Law and Customs*, by Julius Jolly, (Greater India Society), p. 209.

in a body, divided and cultivated the lands according to their own choice. All this shows that the people in the rural areas were in the habit of managing their own affairs.

future of Indian democracy

The seeds of modern democracy were sown in the last century by the British. Down the succession of centuries the soil was being prepared for national unity and democracy. The great empire-builders like Asoka, Samudra Gupta, Harsha and Akbar aimed at achieving the political unity of the country. Cultural harmony was sought to be established by the intellectual classes among the Buddhists, Jains and Hindus by a process of synthesis, evidence of which is to be found in this verse : For philosophy, Buddha : for correct living Jaina : for secular administration Veda: and for meditation Parama-Shiva (Supreme God). Scores of saints like Jnaneshwar, Tukaram, Ramdas, Chaitanya, Tulsidas, Ramanand, Nanak and the Alwars of the South were trying to break down the priestly influence and the rigidity of caste, preaching the love of God and the love of man (*Bhakti marga*). Backed by this accumulated force, Gandhiji could work the miracle of making the "dumb millions" shout with one voice, "Quit India".

The Universities began to function with the establishment of peace after the rebellion of 1857. As Treveleyan deposed in the House of Lords in 1853, and anticipated by Macaulay, "a class of influential and intelligent youth" arose "as propagators of our system". The "youth" understood "our system" as meaning rational outlook on life and rule by

the people. Comparing the history of higher thought in East and West, they discovered that their past was in no way darker but decidedly brighter than that of Europe.

To give two instances : Indian thought always held that the universe has neither beginning nor end (*anadyanat samsarah*) ; but to their surprise they found that as late as the 17th century there could be a Vice-Chancellor of no less a University than Cambridge (Dr. Lightfoot) to propound the theory that "man was created by the Trinity on October 23, 4004 B.C. at 9 o'clock in the morning.¹³ Similarly they were shocked by the history of the insensate and bloody conflict between science and religion which was made impossible in India by the ancient thinkers of India like Jaimini, Kumarila and Shankara.¹⁴

But they also found that various customs relating to caste, untouchability, women, sea voyage, etc., dragged Hindu society from the pristine purity of the principle of social organization. They discovered in their own antiquity all the guidance they desired for progress in the modern age. Space does not permit the citation of the original texts. These points are discussed by Shri Panikkar in *Hindu Society at the Cross Roads*.

¹³ *History of Anthropology*, (Thinker's Library), p. 39.

¹⁴ (a) *Sanibhavati Drishta phala kative, Adnishta Kalpanaya Anyayatval*. If effect is visible, it is illogical to ascribe it to an invisible cause.

(b) *Swayaparatinkdestha Vedasyapi Mrusyapi Mrusharthata* (*Kumarila-Shlotta Vartika*). Any statement in *Veda* beyond its (spiritual) province, it also is fallible.

Suffice it to say that no educated Hindu defends caste, or untouchability. The recent legislation about *sagotra* and inter-caste marriages has practically given the *go-by* to it. Is this not marvellous in view of what Meredith Townshed wrote, "The very missionary who dies a martyr to his efforts to convert the Indian would die unhappy if his daughter married the best convert among them?"¹⁵ Customs and habits die hard.

The rapid spread of education among the lower classes including the Harijans and aborigines is bound to wipe out the artificial barriers. History shows that Hindu society absorbed Greeks, Huns, Scythians, and Bactrians, and also elevated the aborigines and untouchables. It is interesting to notice that Vyasa, the author of *Mahabharatha* and compiler of the *Vedas*, Valmiki, the author of the *Ramayana*, Vasistha and many other *rishis* and *munis* were drawn from the aborigines.

As to women, they ever enjoyed high respect from Gargi and Maitreyi of the *Upanishads* to Sarojini and Vijayalaxmi. They played a conspicuous part in many fields, not excluding that of battle. Their literary activity is attested by Macnicol in *The Poems by Indian Women*.¹⁶

Custom has long been replaced by legislation, and now it is not custom but public opinion that is ruling, as in all democracies. Whatever dispute there is regarding joint-family, daughter's share, is on points of detail, not on principles.

¹⁵ *Asia and Europe* (1903), p. 72.

¹⁶ *Heritage of India Series*.

As to religion, few people care to know that the soul of Hindu religion is not Polytheism or Idolatry but Philosophy embodied in what is called *Prasthana Traya*, the triple crown of religious thought at its highest level.¹⁷ The reciter of the *Puranas*, etc., starts with *Bramha nirupana* (exposition of philosophy) which is followed by an *akhyana* (legend) illustrating the application of principle to life. The best instance of popular collective worship is to be found in Satya-Narayan Pooja where TRUTH is worshipped as NARAYANA (God). The study connected with it expounds the value of truth in life.

Nowadays, everywhere one hears the cry : Back to Religion. What religion ? Of the Churches, Temples and Mosques to save the so-called individual (the ego in man) for democracy ? As Dr. William Temple, Primate of England, said, "It is a great mistake to suppose that God is only, or even chiefly concerned with religion". *Chhandogya Upanishad* says : Once the great Narada muni approached Sanatkumar (son of the Eternal) and plaintively said: "Sir, I am *mantravid* (Master of Doctrine) but not *atmavid* (Master of Self); will you teach me *atman* (Self) ? The answer was : *Aham eva idam sarvam, atmaiva idam sarvam* (I and *atma* are this all). That is, an individual must realize the universal element in him that embraces all. "The Kingdom of Heaven (universal) is within you." "The unity of religions must be sought in that which is divine, namely, universal in man, and not in that which is human in the doctrines."¹⁸

Since the beginning of the 19th century, India has produced great national leaders in every walk of

¹⁷ *Upanishads, Brahmasutra and Bhagawad Gita.*

¹⁸ *Human Destiny* (Signet Books), p. 125.

life. They have done their best to take advantage of the best that the West has to give, viz., democracy coupled with science. India has decided by her free will to remain within the British Commonwealth. Its significance lies in the fact that temperamentally Britain and India are 'evolutionary'.

Now that India has attained prominence in the world counsels, what would be her natural direction of progress ? Her age-old tradition is vividly found described in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Chapter II (*Brahmavalli*) where it is shown that Nature produces the external man (perfected physical body) and after that his journey is spiritual through Life (*Prana*), Mind (*Mana*), Reason (*Vijnana*) to Supreme Joy (*Anand*) which comes from the cultivation of Love (*Priyam*). Spiritual progress has a close bearing on social progress. Hence, as Sir A. Toynbee says, the real progress is in the improvement of our social heritage, not of our breed.¹⁹ True to her tradition, India has chosen to tread the path of 'peaceful co-existence'.

What is her future ? In the words of Shri Nehru, "We who are the children of the ancient civilization... have much that gives equilibrium to the mind and spirit, a calm and unhurried outlook on life which refuses to be flurried or flustered at changing events. That essentially is the hall-mark of ancient culture. It is that that China has in abundant measure ; it is this, I believe that India also possesses. And because of this it will be well with India."²⁰

¹⁹ *Civilization on Trial*, (Oxford University Press), p. 262.

²⁰ *With No Regrets*, by K. Huthéesingh, p. 6.

5

religious resources in hinduism

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri & M. Yamunacharya

DEMOCRACY in India has become an accomplished fact. India has declared herself a Sovereign Democratic Republic. The importance of the people (*viśah*) constitutes the cornerstone of democracy. This has been recognized by political and religious thought in ancient India. It finds mention in the Rigveda. The common people (*viśah*) held their deliberations in a *samiti* over which the king presided. They exercised political authority and acted as healthy checks on the arbitrary exercise of power by the king. That decisions were arrived at in the *samiti* by a method of discussion is evidenced by the *Samajnāna Sūkta* of the Rigveda which runs thus :

“Assemble, and discuss. Let your minds be of one accord. Our prayer is common, the Assembly is common, and the minds and hearts are united. In consensus of opinion united be the thoughts of all that may happily agree.”

The significant expression, *samānīva ākutih* means ‘consensus’ arrived at in conference or by a method of discussion. This is in harmony with the modern view of democracy. Ernest Barker defines democracy as a method of government by discussion and persuasion. The religious significance of the *samiti* is brought

out by the description that she is the daughter of *Prajāpati*, the Lord of all beings, along with *sabhbā*, a sister democratic institution.

dignity of individual

The importance of the individual is a factor of great significance for a democratic view of life. The individual does not exist for the State but the State exists for the individual. The notion of the sanctity of the individual soul, which is sexless and casteless, laid the foundations in the Upanishads for a democratic view of life. One of the Upanishads proclaimed, that man was the highest thing conceivable (*na mānusāt śrestha taram hikincit*). The equality of all souls was comprised in the notion of Brahman being the immanent reality in all souls. The doctrine of Divine Immanence (*antaryāmitva*) laid the foundation of a spiritual democracy. Kant, in his formulation of the categorical imperative, stated that no individual should be treated as means to an end but as an end in himself. The same principle was adumbrated in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* Upanishad which stated that all human relations are sanctified by the fact that they are cemented in love through the spirit in man (*ātmanastu kāmāya*). The husband loves the wife because of the Spirit in her, and the wife in turn loves the husband because of the Spirit in him. So do the parents love their children, and for the same reason do children love the parents. The equality of all consists in all becoming equally a means to the end, viz., the Spirit within man. Indian thought down the ages has thus held fast to what has been called by Walter Lippmann as 'mystical equality', by which he means that the personality of every man and woman is sacred and

individual, in the sense that it is the Soul that matters and not the fact that it has as its tabernacle a masculine or a feminine body. The spiritual equality of the sexes is also recognized by this.

The recognition of the divine spark latent in every human being has often been obscured by secular considerations, but soon there has been a resurgence of the living gospel leavening the whole mass and illuminating the vision of mankind. After the age of the Upanishads, Buddhism and Jainism kept the flame alive. But darkness supervened. Hide-bound conservatism prevailed. Shackles of caste tethered the human spirit to considerations of high and low despite the resurgent spirit of spiritual equality of man struggling to make itself felt. The principle of the dignity of the individual was a logical corollary from the idea of divine immanence. Both Saṅkara and Rāmānuja look upon the individual as the *amśa* or part of the Lord. Saṅkara indicates that 'the individual and the Lord, are related as sparks to fire'. Rāmānuja says that the individual has to be construed as a part of Brahman and hence to be regarded as such. The relation between the individual soul and the Supreme Soul, according to him, is one of body and soul (*sarīra sarīri bhāva*). The *jīva* or the individual soul is sanctified by the fact that it is the vehicle of expression for the Supreme Soul.

The Absolutism of Saṅkara with its corollary that all is Brahman, that you are Brahman (*sarvam khalvidam Brahma* and *tat tvam asi*) and the theistic movements of *Bhakti* of which Rāmānuja was the foremost philosopher, prepared the way for the democratic equality of man in Hindu religious thought. The worth

of the individual, the recognition to be accorded to his rights to life, liberty and salvation are the most significant religious resources for Indian democracy. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan, "The main emphasis of Hindu religion is the potentiality of the divine in man. There is no unbridgeable gulf between God and man and between man and man. The vision supreme established universal kinship, the oneness of man in God."¹

concern for neighbour

In the *Mahabharata*, the doctrine of *ātmaupamya*, literally 'others like ourselves' sounds the keynote of consideration for others without which no democracy is possible. Bhīshma says in the *Moksha Dharma* of the *Mahabharata*, "This is the sum of duty ; do naught to others which if done to thee, would cause thee pain" (*na tat paresu kurvīta jānannapriyam ātmānah*). He further says, "What one loves for oneself, he must love for others also" (*yadyadātmāna iccheta tat parasyāpi cintayet*). Every man must concede to others the right to live their life in their own way without infringing similar rights vested in others. This principle receives further extension, amplification and implementation in the principle of equity as applied to the possession and enjoyment of worldly goods. This idea is an amplification of the first line of the *Īśvāsyā Upanishad* which says that the real ownership of the estate of the world vests in the Divine Being. We are allowed to use the world and its goods in such a way (*tena tyaktēna bhunjīthāh*) that we should

¹ "Hinduism and the West" in *Modern India and the West*. Edited by T. S. S. O'Mally, p. 343.

never forget that we hold whatever we have in trust for others. “*Mā gridhāḥ kasya sviddhanam*”. “Do not covet what does not belong to you”. This teaching cuts at the very root of all acquisitiveness and greed.

This is an ideology on which Sri Vinoba Bhave is seeking to solve the land problem in this country and aiming at the reconstruction of a society patterned after the *Sarvodaya* ideal.² In the application of the principle of equity and economic equality, Bhishma says in the *Moksha Dharma*, “With the surplus wealth which one may happen to own, one should relieve the wants of the indigent”. The surplus (*atiriktaḥ*) of the ‘haves’ must be shared (*samvibhajana*) with the ‘have-nots’ (*akincana*). Saṅkara defined *dāna* or charity as *sama bhāga*—equal sharing without any notion of condescension. The equitable distribution of the surplus wealth that is produced can alone justify, according to Bhishma, industrial and commercial activities undertaken for profit. The surplus should not be coveted for its own sake. Mere profit motive (*lobha*) is condemned. All surplus wealth produced by honest means must be put to such meritorious use tending toward common welfare (*puṇya*). God has so ordained things (*vidhātrā vihitam*) that that surplus which has been gathered from the community must flow back to the community for its consolidation and well-being (*lokasaṅgraha*). Bhishma’s view is that this is the norm of things and any disturbance of this or imbalance will upset the delicately poised social equilibrium (*sūkshma dharmārtha nigatam*). These delicate considerations are said to inspire the conduct of the good (*satām caritam uttamam*).

² See Vinoba Bhave’s *Isayasya vrtti*.

egalitarian samadarśana

The egalitarian principle implied in democracy finds its spiritual sanction in what the *Gītā* calls ‘*samadarśana*’ or looking upon all with an equal eye. The good man, the holy man, the saint, the seer, the *jñāni* or the *bhakta* is each one of them characterised by the egalitarian outlook or *samadarśana*. “He sees the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self.” He has attained to a vision of equality of all (*sarvatra samadarśanah*, 6. 29). According to the *Gītā* the wise men are those who have this egalitarian outlook (*panditāḥ samadarśinah*, 5. 18).

Sri. K. M. Panikkar in one of his essays points out that caste is inconsistent with democracy. But the growth of spirituality fostered by the several *bhakti* movements in this country set up the current of democracy flowing and swept the people off their feet by the tide of a feeling of brotherhood and humanity exemplified by the teachers of the *Bhakti* school. Many examples could be brought forward of these great teachers who simply ignored the notions of high or low based on considerations of birth and embraced all humanity in the surging emotion of *bhakti*. This acted as a leavening force in Hindu society. Rāmānuja, the protagonist of the Vaiṣṇava school of thought in South India, showed by his example that the worth of an individual does not lie in his birth but in his character. He had in his predecessors, the Ālvārs, a great example to follow. Sāranga Muni bore *Tirupāṇālvār*, the Harijan saint, on his shoulders triumphantly into the temple of Srī Raṅganātha at Srīraṅgam. Rāmānuja had a disciple Dhanurdāsa by name who had been won over by him to an intense love and devotion to

God weaning him away from his absorption in a woman. Rāmānuja was growing in years and in his old age he would go every morning to the river to bathe leaning on a Brāhmaṇa disciple of his and after having bathed, he would lean on Dhanurdāsa, his Sūdra disciple and would come into the temple with him. The orthodox looked upon this as profanity. But Rāmānuja silenced his critics by saying that while his body was cleansed by the waters of the river, his soul became purified only by the touch of such a sincere lover of God as Dhanurdāsa who was the very embodiment of sweetness and humility. Such conduct on the part of the great teachers of India is fraught with tremendous significance for the fostering of the democratic way of life.

spiritual democracy of saints

The Ālvārs and the Nāyanmārs of Tamil Nad, the Haridāsas and Sivasaraṇas of the Karṇātaka and Bhaktas of Bengal and Bihar, Gujarat and Mahārāshṭra have been the apostles of spiritual democracy. Gandhiji followed them in all humility and with an unexampled courage of conviction and revived in our own time the attitudes and ways of life of these saints most necessary for the building up of a democratic society in India whose roots are to be found in the mental and spiritual values embodied in India's spiritual heritage.

Narasi Mehta, a mystic of Gujarat whose song, *Vaiṣṇava Janato*, was a favourite with Gandhiji, spoke of the true Vaiṣṇava as 'one who despises none'. Chaitanya threw open the gates of *bhakti* to the lowliest and the lost. The Maratha saints like Tukārām

and Nāmdev, did the same. Purandara Dāsa and Kanaka Dāsa, Bāsava and Allama Prabhu accomplished a similar religious and social revolution in Karṇātaka. The spirit of spiritual democracy of the saints of India found a modern expression in the leaders of the religious renaissance of the 19th century, in Rājā Ram Mohan Roy, in Swāmi Dayananda Saraswati, in Srī Rāmakrishṇa and Swāmi Vivekānanda, Ramaṇa Mahīshi and Arabindo; and the movements that they started are bearing rich fruit and making it easy for the people of India to adapt themselves to the ideas of a democratic society. The smooth change-over from archaic ideals of society to a new dynamic democratic society in India is a testimony to the influence that the saintly tradition has always exercised on the masses of the people in India. Events in recent times have shown that the so-called 'caste-ridden' peoples of India have been enabled in a remarkable way to pass through a great transition from an old pattern of society to a new pattern of society, for the simple reason that they had as part of their *ethos* rich religious resources for a democratic way of life.

dynamic of faith

The approach familiarized to the people of India by their saints is the only safe approach for India to follow. Thereby India will be able to adapt itself to the new spirit of the times without jeopardising in any manner the imperishable spiritual values of her civilization. Here are the dynamic aspects of Hindu religious thought and life which can help us to evolve a satisfactory political, social and economic order, without resorting to regimentation but by revivifying the free movement inherent in the life of India. Only

leaders who are animated by a courage of conviction and a steadfast adherence to the moral and spiritual ideals of Indian civilization can succeed in this task. Mere secularism or materialism is too barren a gospel to inspire the masses in India.

Speaking about democracy, the famous French philosopher, Henri Bergson, says : "It confers on man inviolable rights. These rights, in order to remain inviolate, demand of all men an incorruptible fidelity to duty. It therefore takes for its matter an ideal man, who respects others as he does himself, inserting himself into obligations which he holds to be absolute, making them coincide so closely with this absolute that it is no longer possible to say whether it is the duty that confers the right or the right which imposes the duty. The citizen thus defined is both 'a law-maker and subject', as Kant has it. The citizens as a whole, the people, are therefore sovereign. Such is democracy in theory. It proclaims liberty, demands equality and reconciles these two hostile sisters by reminding them that they are sisters, by exalting above everything fraternity. Looked at from this angle, the republican motto shows that the third term dispels the oft-noted contradiction between the two others, and that the essential thing is fraternity ; a fact which would make it possible to say that democracy is evangelical in essence and that its motive power is love." The *Gitā* speaks of the *maitrī*, universal friendliness or love, and *karuṇā*, compassion as the chief characteristic of a *bhakta*.

The above elucidation of the concept of democracy in the light of India's spiritual tradition makes us aver that the philosophic principles and the religious basis of democracy in India lie in the life and teaching

of India's saints. Their conception and their exemplification of the fraternity of man in and through love of God has stirred Indian society deeply and Gandhiji's success in this regard is to be traced to him not so much as a politician but as a man of God.

Kindliness and human sympathy that animated the saints and seers of India find their noblest expression in a prayer uttered in the *Srīmad Bhāgavata*:

*'Kāmaye duhka taptānām
prāṇinām ārti nāsanam'*

The purport of this prayer is :

'The only desire that lingers in me is to wipe the tears of those that suffer from the anguish of pain.'

Compassion or *daya* is the keynote of the sense of fraternity to be fostered in the human community. A great religious teacher of Karṇātaka, Bāsava, has said that 'compassion is the root of religion, and without it there can be no religion'. This has been the refrain of the saints and seers of India. This is the foundation on which Indian democracy is going to be reared and sustained.

6

contribution of christianity

Father Jerome D'Souza

IT is generally accepted by students of contemporary history that European thought and social practice have been important contributory factors in the Indian Renaissance of today. The impact of Western civilization on the ancient culture of the land, which began with the coming of the Europeans and the establishment of European power on the subcontinent, attained its widest scope and maximum strength through the system of English education which dominated the intellectual life of India for over a century. During this period Christian thought penetrated the Indian mind through two channels. First, there was the general Christian inspiration of much that was most characteristic of European civilization, even in its secular aspects, particularly the Christian character of some of the greatest of the English classics which the youth of India studied with passionate enthusiasm. Secondly, there was the direct Christian preaching and the dissemination of Christian Scriptures by Christian missionaries. Their educational and social work grew steadily in amplitude and importance all through the last 150 years. The English rulers too, though careful to maintain religious neutrality, and to respect the practice of Indian religions, were nevertheless men of Christian faith, and often

men of fervent Christian practice. These three factors—the Christian background of the rulers, the Christian inspiration of English literature, and the evangelistic work of the Christian missionaries made Christian thought a pervasive influence in the life of India during the last hundred years.

Christian impact on Indian life

That influence exerted itself on almost all the facets of the Indian Renaissance. Admittedly it affected religious thought and practice, and modified social customs and traditions to a profound degree. Many of the reform movements in modern Hinduism were the result of the Christian challenge.¹ But important as these other aspects of the Indian revival are, its most notable achievement is undoubtedly the creation and fostering of the political movement in India, a movement at once for national sovereignty and for democratic liberties. It registered its triumphs in the successive instalments of self-government, each marking an increased Indian participation in the management of the affairs of the country, and a widening of popular liberties. It achieved its final triumph in the independence of India, the forging of a democratic constitution and the entry of India on the international stage as one of the great democracies of the present age.

While it is true that the Indian Renaissance as a whole was the result of the ferment caused by the

¹ See on this subject the indispensable work of Farquhar: *Modern Religious Movements in India*. Their bearing on political evolution will be easily discerned.

mingling of Western ideals with the ideals of Indian culture, the different aspects of it were not equally indebted to the West. In the religious and artistic developments there was, to a large extent, the element of "revivalism", or return to the past. But in the political awakening the rôle of European ideas was dominant. Our task within the compass of this brief essay is to try and disengage from out of the totality of broadly "Western" ideas the specifically Christian concepts which have gone to the making of this political revival ; to indicate the manner in which they have reacted on the older Indian heritage, fostering and vivifying congenial elements in it, repressing adverse ones ; and finally to point out the difference between these Christian ideas, and those developments in modern European political thought which have clearly diverged from the Christian tradition, but have nevertheless affected, and are likely to affect Indian thinking.

There are, however, certain difficulties in the way of analysing and evaluating the contribution of Christian thought to Indian political ideas, which it is necessary to note at the outset. The Indian people are a profoundly religious people with a long and unbroken tradition of religious thought, religious sentiment and religious practice. Now, whatever be the original elements of any religion and in particular, the unique features of Christianity, it remains true that all religious people share a fundamental belief in God, in the spirituality and eternal destiny of the human soul, and in the primary obligations of the moral law. In attributing certain ideas to Christianity we should not overlook the fact that

Hinduism and other religions of India may have contained, implicitly or explicitly, similar if not identical doctrines. The Christian influence, therefore, in such instances may not be by way of innovation but rather by way of special emphasis or by the modalities which Christian tradition and practice has given to a specific doctrine.

Again, the infiltration of Christian ideas into the culture and thought of India does not date from the modern period. There was a Christian community in India from the time of St. Thomas, the Apostle. Christian travellers penetrated into India through the North-Western Frontier from the earliest times and brought with them Christian stories and legends which left echoes in the Indian consciousness. Sir George Grierson, whose authority none will question, attributed to Christian inspiration, not indeed the origin, but the efflorescence of *Bhakti* in the years after the Muslim conquest.² The assimilative power of the Indian mind took in and gave an Indian colouring to many ideas, some of them characteristically Christian, of non-Indian origin. This dynamic evolution of Indian culture and its final composite character makes it difficult for any one to state with certainty the extent of Christian influence on the political thought of India.

presuppositions of democracy

In considering the subject of democracy, it is necessary to distinguish between two different elements in it: the underlying philosophy regarding

² See his article on *Bhakti* in Hasting's *Encyclopædia of Religions*.

the nature of man, his rights and obligations, and the machinery of democratic government, the control of the executive by the people through representatives elected by universal adult suffrage. This machinery may vary to some extent in different democratic countries. We see those differences exemplified in the constitutions of England, France, and the United States. But the broad principle of watching over the exercise of power by the people, remains constant in all democratic governments. Lincoln's famous saying adequately sums up this aspect of democracy ; government of the people, for the people, by the people.

But democracy is not only a special kind of political machinery. It presupposes certain ideas regarding the nature of man and of society, and a clear view of the rights of the individual and of the community as applied to political society. These ideas may not by themselves constitute an entire "way of life" since a way of life embraces a wider area than political activity, and amounts to a philosophic and religious system, touching all aspects of life. Now Christianity, like other religions, is a way of life, and its teaching regarding the individual and society and their mutual relations have influenced profoundly the development of democracy in the West. And India has, in the last stage of her political evolution, adopted these basic concepts almost in their entirety in their Western form.

The first and foremost among them is the notion of the dignity and worth of the human person, with that emphasis on his individuality characteristic of the West. That implies the existence in him of an element which makes him master of his destiny.

namely, his freedom and spiritual aspirations. By virtue of these he is a world in himself, with direct relationship with God, and so, in spite of his limitations and dependences, he is an end in himself, and has interests transcending the interests of time and of this world. Now this dignity and independence come to man from the mere fact of his being a man. It gives him rights and obligations which are inalienable, and in the last analysis, incapable of being controlled from outside or by material means. In the inner citadel of his soul, man is free and escapes the power of all tyrants. And this dignity and inner sovereignty are the birthright of every man ; in these essential respects all men are equal.

But this autonomous being with the power and obligation to pursue the good proper to his composite nature is nevertheless dependent on his fellows in a twofold manner. He is dependent because of his physical weakness—the conditions of his birth and upbringing, and his manifold physical needs ; he is also dependent from his essentially expansive nature. He has a capacity for understanding and for love which draws him toward his fellows and gives his life a double movement, a movement of spiritual love for God and a movement of social contact with men. Man therefore seeks society, lives in and is perfected by society. Man's impulse to live in society, society's function of pursuing the good proper to it, the rights and obligations which flow from this duty of seeking the common good, are all derived from nature and are willed by the Author of nature.

Christian teaching regarding the nature of the common good to be pursued by society, and the

authority which society wields in order to secure the end proper to it, has been clarified by thinkers from St. Augustine to Jacques Maritain, in a manner which integrates it firmly within the entire Christian philosophy of life. The good which society should pursue, the common good, is not merely the sum total of the good of each member, but a distinct good proper to a social organism, a good which is intended to flow back to the individual and enable him to perfect himself in the line of intelligence and love natural to man. This common good which transcends the good of each individual is, as we said, set before society by the Author of nature. Hence the obligations which bind the individual member of society in the pursuit of the common good are binding on him in conscience ; they flow from the natural law. In other words, social obligations are part of the moral law, the prescriptions of which are based on the authority of God, and cannot be tampered with by men. This is a matter of capital importance because on this depends the Christian concept of the nature of authority in the state.

These general principles are applicable to all forms of society which are natural to man and by means of which he seeks to find perfection and happiness. They are true of the primary social unity, the family. They apply to the various other societies which man organizes for the furtherance of particular objectives which he chooses for special attention out of the volume of virtues and perfections proper to his whole nature as man—religious societies, cultural societies, economic societies, all of which, when constituted duly and established on a basis of jus-

tice, have their share of authority and their right to claim the allegiance of their members. They are most applicable to political society which embraces in its purview, if not under its direct control, all the good proper to the temporal prosperity of man.

Now it is obvious that from the theoretical point of view, confirmed by historical experience, many types of political society can be formed for the adequate pursuit of the common good. Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy are the basic types. While it is true that the first two have been approved and eulogised by Christian thinkers for the sake of the special values which they safeguard, it is in consonance with Christian thought and the implications of that dignity and fundamental equality of all men, to look upon democracy as the natural culmination to the political evolution of civilized man. To this essential spiritual autonomy and mastery over his interior life, it is natural to add power to control the activity of political society, to which is entrusted the supervision of so much that pertains to his happiness. His human dignity and equality with his fellows entitle him to a share in political power. If he has no civic responsibility, there would be a notable gap in his social activity.

These principles of social action and social authority are discernible to the reflecting minds of all people, provided there is the recognition of man's dual nature and his spiritual destiny. The Greeks and the Romans realized and practised much of what we have said about society and the political "City". But even among the best of their thinkers there is ignorance regarding the fundamental equality of men. And

while these are magnificent affirmations of the sanctity of the natural law and the primacy of moral standards, there were grave deficiencies in practice as evidenced by the prevalence of slavery and the inferior status of women, by pitilessness to the vanquished foe and callousness about human life. There was no grasp of the truth that the ultimate sanction for the moral law lay in the justice and holiness of God. The polytheisms and mythologies of the pagan religions had blinded even the best of minds to the supreme grandeur of the Divine Majesty.

It was the Gospel that gave to Europe its deeply humanizing touch, and directed its outlook to God, Father of all men. It brought the message of universal salvation, it denied the distinction between Greek and Barbarian, Jew and Gentile ; it preached with truly astonishing force and beauty the brotherhood of men and the duty of mutual love. At the same time it made these social virtues an essential part of spiritual perfection, that perfection which was to imitate the perfection of the Heavenly Father Himself. The Gospel brought God and man together, and all men together, in the bonds of love, on a basis of justice. Under its influence, slavery disappeared in Europe, the status of women rose to one of equality with men, the orphan, the stranger, and the prisoner were cared for, the sick and the incurable tended with love.

India received the message of Christian brotherhood and of human equality under the rule of law, in various forms. It came to us through the establishment of the British system of law based on individual liberty, and the impartial administration of

justice in our courts. It came to us through the message of political liberty taught in English classics, from Milton to John Morley, and exemplified in English history by the struggle of the people for constitutional liberties. In a large measure it came to us by the direct preaching of the Gospel by Christian missionaries and the example of their work among the aborigines, the untouchables, and other classes of underprivileged people. Consequently the Indian movement for political emancipation went hand in hand with a movement for social regeneration and for social justice. All these many-sided aspects find expression in the Constitution of Free India.

constitutional provisions

The Constitution embodies the nature and deliberate conclusions of India's political and social leaders regarding the nature, the powers and the responsibilities of the Indian State, and the rights and obligations of the Indian citizen. It marks the stage, now definitely reached, in the evolution of Indian social thought, when loyalty to community—a caste or racial or linguistic group—and obedience to its prescriptions, are replaced by love and loyalty to the motherland in which all the citizens have equal status and dignity. The motherland is organized in the form of a political federation or union whose rulers claim the obedience of the citizens by virtue of laws directed to the common good and drawing their ultimate sanction from the sanctity of the moral law. The Constitution opens with a magnificent enumeration of the fundamental rights of the individual rights intended to safeguard his personal autonomy and freedom in choosing means which he

judges suitable for his perfection and happiness. In response to the specific conditions in India and making explicit what is implicit in the other fundamental rights, it abolishes untouchability. It gives to minorities the amplest guarantees for the safeguard of their religious and cultural rights. It includes a chapter on the Directive Principles of Policy intended to guide the legislatures in their ultimate objective of creating a Welfare State, a democratic, not a totalitarian, Welfare State.

Finally, the Constitution makes these fundamental rights justiciable, and places them under the protection of the Supreme Courts even as against the arbitrary action of the state. It thus consecrates the notion of law as being superior to the will of men and as drawing its strength from principles of universal validity. Modelled on the constitutions and traditions of Western democracies, the Constitution of India without using religious phraseology enshrines principles which are derived from the Christian humanism of the West. But the adoption of this humanism was facilitated by the fact that at its root there is a spiritual philosophy, a belief in the spiritual destiny of man and in the sanctity of the moral law which are capital in Indian thought also. In other words, it is a spiritual, not a secular, humanism.

Nevertheless, the Constitution of India sets up a secular state, that is, a state which does not place in a position of advantage or preference any particular religious group, but treats all with tolerance and equal sympathy. This secularism should not be confounded with the doctrinal secularism which is opposed to all manifestations of religion based upon faith.

in invisible realities and in man's eternal destiny. That secularism is based upon a materialistic view of life, and constitutes in itself a religion which, when espoused by the state, is bound to be detrimental to other religions. The secularism of the Indian State is based upon the concept of the function of the state as being confined to the promotion of temporal welfare, and as leaving to the individual conscience and to religious organizations the task of conducting the affairs of religion according to each one's convictions. It is a secularism which does not exclude a sympathetic interest in the religious activities of the citizen, and the recognition of the religious rights of individuals and of groups, provided they are based upon justice, and are consistent with the common good. Thus the Indian State accepts responsibility for the administration of religious endowments in accordance with the laws of the groups and corporations concerned. It gives subsidies to schools, and colleges, and universities conducted by religious denominations, provided there is no unfair discrimination or intolerance in their administration.

christian thought and the secular state

Here again, Christian thought gives to Indian democracy a sound and reasoned justification for its religious policy. Christianity does not favour the notion of a theocratic government. Even in the Middle Ages, when the almost unanimous acceptance of a single form of Christianity by the nations of Europe led to the establishment of the Church in most countries and its full support by the state, the Christian Church distinguished between the spiritual and the temporal, the realm of Cæsar and the realm of God,

each independent of the other, each with its own sphere. Undoubtedly there must be relations between the two, nay the temporal ruler must recognize the superiority of the spiritual order in his scale of values and in his personal life. However Christian thought has never ceased to evolve on this subject of relations between the Church and the state. The contents of the agreements, or concordats, between Church and state have varied according to times and conditions. But it is being more and more recognized that the establishment of a particular religion where there are diversities of religious faith "injects into political society a divisive principle and to that extent jeopardises the temporal common good".³

In this also, Christian thought coincided with traditional Hindu concepts. It is true that Hindu kings, like their compeers in Christendom, gave patronage to their own religion. But the distinction between the governing class and the priestly class was always maintained, and more than under Christian and Muslim rulers, there was tolerance and respect for other religions. It is not surprising therefore that the idea of a secular state should have been accepted without serious demur in New India.

deviations from christian view

The classical Christian teaching regarding the rights of the individual and his relationship to the state which we have tried to sketch, was however not applied consistently by all European countries. It did not ensure uniform respect for the rights of the individual and prevent the growth of absolutism

³ Maritain : *Human Rights and Natural Law*, p. 27.

in many places. We know that even in many professedly Christian states and societies, while the spiritual autonomy of the individual was generally respected, there was an exaggerated notion of the prerogatives of monarchs and the ruling class. Within limits it seemed natural to them to act on the assumption that the rulers could govern the ruled for the benefit of the ruler and not for the good of the ruled. The profound teaching of the leading theologians of the 16th century—Vasquez, Suarez, Bellarmine and others—on the sovereignty of the people, met with strong opposition both in Catholic and in Protestant countries, particularly in England under James I, when the theory of the Divine Right of Kings was being elaborated. In England however the absolutism of the monarchies was curbed by the triumph of the Whig aristocracy in the Revolution of 1688. Although this did not usher in the period of the recognition of people's rights, it mitigated royal autocracy and prepared the way for the next step. In France, the absolutism of the monarchy led to the development of a political philosophy which emphatically reaffirmed the rights of the people. But Rousseau and his disciples were no longer in touch with Christian thought on these matters. Their theory of the Social Contract and the absolute sovereignty of the people, of the sacredness of the "general will" as the ultimate source of authority, showed profound deviations from the fundamental assumptions of Christian teaching.

Rousseau deified human nature declaring that by itself it is noble and just and pure. He ascribed the creation of society, and in particular of the states, to the free action of individuals who gave to the ruler

authority to govern by the surrender of their personal rights. The authority of the state was therefore the sum total of the rights of individuals, of the individual authority which each one has over himself. The notion of a common good above the individual good and of an authority binding in conscience was done away with. The will of the people was the supreme criterion of all righteousness and the source of all law. Thus the state, as conceived by Rousseau, contained the germs of an absolutism even more dangerous than the royal absolutism which it sought to destroy.

Equally radical was the departure of Rousseau and the French philosophers from the traditional Christian teaching regarding human nature. They taught an optimism which in reality makes the democratic machinery of government—the control by the ruled, of the exercise of power by the rulers—unnecessary. If indeed man is essentially noble, and the law of moral progress by which he becomes better and better is an infallible law, then there is no need to control the expert and the ruler. The statesmen, the administrators, and the technicians, are better fitted to rule than the mass of the people because of their professional knowledge. It is to be noted that this logical development of the views of Rousseau coincides both as regards the perfectibility of man and the sacredness of the power of the state with the teaching of Marx who received his idea of the "divinity" of the state from Hegelian Monism. It is therefore not surprising that the "liberal" democrats of Europe could not resist convincingly the totalitarianism of the Communist states. The similarity of their fundamental ideology deprived them of the

strength and conviction needed to oppose the new tyranny.

Christian teaching justifies the mechanism of democratic government, its system of checks and balances, its provision for continual vigilance over those who exercise power, on the doctrine of the corruptibility of man, in other words, on the belief in what is theologically called "Original Sin". This does not mean that man is essentially and wholly corrupt. The power of his reason and his aspirations towards the true and the good remain. But "fallen" human nature tends to evil ways, to pride and sensuality. In particular, power corrupts men, and it is commonly said that absolute power corrupts absolutely. So the need, based on the exigencies of human nature, for the power to replace the corrupt or inefficient ruler by others who know that their mandate comes from the people, is the truest justification of the democratic machinery of government.⁴

From this it is clear that "sovereignty of the people" differs in meaning for the Christian thinker, and for the liberal democrat who is a disciple of Rousseau. For the secular humanist the authority of the state is not authority in the true sense at all. The ruler has no right to bind the subject in conscience. The people, or the majority, are the arbiters of what is right and wrong. For the Christian thinker, the authority of the state comes from God. The people have the right to designate those who are to exercise it; but they have also the obligation of obeying the power which they have been instrumental in transmitting to the rulers. Rulers and ruled must respect the sanctity

⁴ See on this subject a suggestive essay by I. V. Sangmead Casserly in *Cross Currents*, New York, Fall 1954.

of law, whether it be the prescriptions of the natural law or the ordinances of positive law drawn up in consonance with the natural law. Thus the power of the state is guaranteed and also limited by the prescriptions of the moral law which allots to individuals and to the state their respective spheres of activity and their due rights and obligations.

As elsewhere, so in India, democratic government, however firmly and wisely established, however hedged in with guarantees and safeguards of all kinds, is open to abuse in ways which have been indirectly pointed out. A mistaken notion of the sovereignty of the people might lead to masked anarchy, to unfair pressure on government, to failure to respect authority. Again, excessive individualism, and the neglect of the common good on the plea of personal autonomy and freedom of action, might lead, by reaction, to undue increase of the power of the state. Paradoxical as it may sound, "democratic totalitarianism" and "majority tyranny" are possible dangers, injurious to the rights of individuals and minorities. The balanced nature of Christian thought which we have tried to bring out, indicates the lines along which these dangers must be overcome. Those principles have found congenial soil in many of the traditional doctrines dear to the Indian people, and have gained the adhesion of our leaders in the various forms in which they have reached them during the years of British rule. On them the structure of the constitutional liberties and obligations of the citizen has been reared. A knowledge and appreciation of them will be powerful means for safeguarding those liberties when tyranny attacks them, and of enforcing those obligations when anarchy enfeebles them.

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